

The University of Chicago

THE HISTORY OF PUBLIC
ASSISTANCE IN CHICAGO
1833 TO 1893

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SERVICE ADMINIS-
TRATION IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1939

By
JAMES BROWN

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, SOCIAL SERVICE MONOGRAPHS
The University of Chicago Press, 1941

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INTRODUCTION

One of the first problems to be faced in undertaking an account of public assistance in a particular jurisdiction is the necessity of settling upon some definition of what the term is to include. One conception would limit consideration solely to assistance granted under the authority of the poor law, while a broader interpretation might expand the term to embrace a variety of services provided the individual out of public funds. Under this more comprehensive conception of public assistance free schooling, the work of the public health authorities and a number of other services for which the individual pays no direct charge would claim consideration. For this present account the term contemplates only those county and municipal services concerned with the relief of destitution.

By far the largest part of the public relief given was poor relief, financed and administered by the county under the so-called "Pauper" laws. The city was occasionally moved to some philanthropic expenditure as, for example, the provision of cheap wood or the opening of a soup kitchen during a particularly hard winter; but in the main these were only gestures of sympathetic interest on the part of the city fathers and unauthorized by any express grant of authority in the city charter.¹ The one municipal relief activity to which any considerable attention is given here was actually connected with the preservation of public health and would not seem to inhere in the definition adopted above; however the early Board of Health in Chicago was so intimately concerned with the sick immigrant--who was usually destitute as well--that it seems necessary to indicate in some detail the part this body played in caring for the sick poor. This was care, not under the authority of the poor law but rather in conformance with the municipal obligation to prevent the spread of disease. It was frequently not clear to the public nor to the officials themselves, why poor persons afflicted with one sort of disease should be cared for by the city, while others in the same household suffer-

¹See below, pp. 41-42.

ing from some other disease should be shunted off to the county. In the resulting confusion in areas of responsibility many poor persons sick with non-contagious diseases were treated by the city physician, and the poor house accepted cholera and smallpox sufferers.¹

Some discussion of assistance administered under private auspices has been included. This has been done primarily to explain the absence or delayed development of some of the public services, notably in the care of dependent children. Cholera epidemics in the 'forties and 'fifties left large numbers of orphaned children in their wake for whom there existed no public provision save the almshouse. The generous response made at this time in the form of private orphanages and child caring societies may be taken as an early protest against the use of this institution as an asylum for homeless children.

Reference has also been made to the activities of voluntary groups in supplementing the work of the public agencies when the officials were unequal to or neglected their duties. Such a situation existed in an acute form between 1848 and 1851 when the county authorities determined to save the tax payers' money by abolishing "out-door" relief. The suffering brought about by the adoption of this policy resulted in the formation of the Chicago Relief Society, later incorporated as the Chicago Relief and Aid Society which in turn is the parent organization of the present United Charities.²

Several considerations led to the selection of the year 1871 rather than the beginning of the Civil War as a closing point for the first section. The dislocations in family life

¹See below, pp. 58-61.

²By 1871, the most important social agencies in Chicago were the Chicago Relief and Aid Society, the Chicago Orphan Asylum, and the Home for the Friendless. Histories of the early work of these organizations have been written. See Mrs. Charles G. Wheeler, Annals of the Chicago Orphan Asylum from 1849 to 1892 (Chicago, 1892); Mrs. Lyman Baird, The History of the Chicago Home for the Friendless from 1859-1909 (Chicago, 1909); also the following unpublished Master's theses (University of Chicago): Marion B. Smith, "History of the Home for the Friendless"; Mamie Ruth Davis, "The Chicago Orphan Asylum"; Marjorie Coonley, "Private Relief Societies in Chicago--1871 to 1910."

occasioned by the war gave rise to new forms of public relief, but administration of this special assistance was fitted into existing machinery, and in the main the period of the war cannot be considered exceptional in the annals of public assistance. The new state constitution of 1870 provided for an important change in county government and marked the end of township organization in Chicago (but not Cook County). Responsibility for poor relief passed from the hands of the county supervisors back to the county commissioners where it was to remain for the next sixty-five years. In October of the same year came the great fire which burned the homes of some 100,000 persons and destroyed property estimated to be worth \$196,000,000. The disbursement of the large sums of money which poured in from all parts of the world was given to the Chicago Relief and Aid Society. The total amount contributed, \$4,996,782, was more than ample to meet the actual disaster needs, the surplus being used to strengthen existing private social agencies. The financial stimulus and prestige resulting from handling this large job left the Relief and Aid Society as the dominant force in the field and for the next few years the county's rôle was a minor one.

The year 1893 makes a convenient stopping point for a second section because by the time of the World's Fair Chicago had grown into a great industrial city with a population of over a million and was presenting new problems in destitution for the county commissioners to solve. The old methods of administration broke down repeatedly under the impact of the new demands, but realization that the county had outgrown its governmental clothes came slowly. Of special interest during the two decades following the fire was the development of the large private relief societies and their relationships with the public authority. In one instance these relationships have been traced in some detail.¹

For the student engaged in research, the period before 1871 is very distinctly set off since the fire consumed practically all of the public records.² In the absence of official

¹See below, pp. 113-26.

²An inventory of the county archives of Illinois made in 1915 listed a few volumes of Cook County records which survived the fire, but these have now disappeared from the county commissioners' vaults. See The County Archives of the State of Illinois (Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, 1915), pp. 3-5.

reports reliance has been placed on the local newspapers for the bulk of the information. In general it may be said that the statute books suggest the outlines of what was being done for the poor by the public officials; however Cook County and Chicago were frequently a step ahead of what the legislature prescribed and did things for which no statutory authority had been given. A county almshouse stood on the public square as early as 1835, four years before the law authorizing the construction of such buildings was passed. Likewise the county agent as the principal officer in the administration of "outdoor" relief existed in Cook County for more than twenty years before such an official was mentioned in the statutes.

There are very considerable difficulties involved in the use of newspapers to piece together anything approaching a continuous account of public assistance. One that is constantly encountered arises from the fact that none of the Chicago libraries has complete files of the early press. In the writing of a monograph this is a serious obstacle since it may happen that at a critical point in the tracing of some special development, the sources of information are cut off and upon resumption the change exists as an accomplished fact. A second difficulty springs from the fact that the early newspaper editors were much more interested in national issues and the chronicling of the city's phenomenal growth and prosperity than in what was going on at the poorhouse. Until 1841, the county commissioners published no record of their proceedings; although from that time on there are occasional reports of their activities and a few financial statements to be found in the newspapers. The only official record of the proceedings of the county board of supervisors which survived the fire exists in an incomplete series of reports beginning in 1866 which is on file at the Municipal Reference Library.

The chief sources of information for the period after 1871 have been the Proceedings of the Cook County Board of Commissioners and the Biennial Reports of the Illinois Board of Public Charities. Included in the Proceedings are the reports of the various county officials administering public assistance; however these reports were published irregularly and the statistics presented are frequently of little value. Newspapers have been canvassed for their accounts of special incidents and developments, although

less use has been made of them than for the early period. Throughout, Miss Bessie Pierce of the Department of History and her research staff have been generous in making suggestions and have permitted the writer to examine material gathered for the second and third volumes of Miss Pierce's History of Chicago.

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PART I - 1833-1871

CHAPTER I

LEGAL BASIS FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE IN COOK COUNTY 1831-1871

As a small and undifferentiated part of the vast Northwest Territory, the present Cook County was presumably under the jurisdiction of the earliest territorial poor law passed in 1790; however since there were at that time neither public officers in the area to administer the law nor any persons to claim benefits under its provisions, this law is only of historical interest.¹

The first relief administered by Cook County after its organization in 1831 was given under the provisions of "An Act for the Maintenance of the Poor" passed in 1827.² Under the terms of this law the county commissioners were vested with "entire and exclusive superintendence of the poor" and were authorized either to make contracts for their care or to "appoint such agents as they deemed necessary to oversee and provide for the same." The poor were defined as those "unable to earn a livelihood in consequence of any bodily infirmity or other unavoidable cause." Non-residents and other persons not coming within the definition of pauper who fell sick or died and did not have funds to pay for their board, nursing, lodging or burial expenses were likewise to be provided for by the commissioners.

The requirements of the earlier territorial and state laws covering the responsibility of relatives for their destitute kinsmen and the apprenticing of dependent children were continued

¹The history of this territorial legislation is set forth in two of the University of Chicago Social Service Monographs: Aileen Kennedy and S. P. Breckinridge, The Ohio Poor Law and Its Administration (1934) and Alice Shaffer, Mary Wysor Keefer, and S. P. Breckinridge, The Indiana Poor Law (1936). A complete discussion of the development of the Illinois poor law is to be found in a third volume of this series, S. P. Breckinridge, The Illinois Poor Law and Its Administration (1939).

²Revised Code of Laws of Illinois, 1826-27, p. 54.

without change; however it is remarkable that the settlement provisions which had been included in all of the earlier laws were omitted in the 1827 law.

Several new provisions were added in the law passed in 1833.¹ The definition of a pauper was expanded to include idiots and lunatics,² while the list of relatives to be called upon for support was extended to include brothers and sisters as well as grandchildren; however in the case of a person whose destitution was adjudged to be the result of his own intemperance, only parents and children were to be charged with his maintenance. No changes were made in the method of granting relief except that persons receiving the services of indentured pauper children were to conform to the provisions of the act concerning apprentices.³

An amendment to this law in 1835 reintroduced the principle of settlement by requiring evidence of twelve months residence in the county immediately preceding the day on which application for assistance was made.⁴ The expense of removal was placed upon the county removing the person rather than on the county of residence.⁵ Workhouses were permitted to be built or purchased by the county commissioners;⁶ however the Cook County commissioners never exercised this option, having already anticipated the legislature by building an almshouse.⁷

The first statutory provision for the construction of county almshouses appeared in the poor law of 1839.⁸ It should be remarked here that the earlier "working house" partook more largely of the method of discipline than of care, so that this law may be said to mark a new departure in methods of care. Permission was given the county commissioners to levy and collect a tax not exceeding one-fourth of one per cent on the taxable property of the county to purchase ground, erect and furnish suitable buildings for the purpose.⁹ In this same act, the office of over-

¹Revised Statutes of Illinois, 1833, p. 480.

²Ibid., sec. 2.

³Ibid., sec. 5.

⁴Laws of Illinois, 1834-35, sec. 2, p. 66.

⁵Ibid., sec. 3.

⁶Ibid., sec. 4.

⁷See below, p. 18.

⁸Laws of Illinois, 1838-39, p. 138.

⁹Ibid., secs. 9, 10, and 11.

seer of the poor appeared again as the administrative officer. There were to be two such officers in each justice's district--one to be the justice of the peace himself and the other a person appointed by the commissioners.¹ It was their duty to provide for the poor by confiding their care to one or more "moral and discreet householders" in the district;² however if the county commissioners chose to adopt the new scheme of relief and build an almshouse, the authority of the overseers was to cease except where there were cases which the county commissioners deemed "prudent" to put out under the care of some person.³ Residence requirements were lowered from twelve to six months at the same time.⁴ This requirement was further reduced in 1841 to thirty days⁵ where it remained until 1861 when it was again raised to six months.⁶ It is certain that Cook County was not interested in the attempts made during this period to modify the settlement requirements, because as early as 1839 there were complaints about the numbers of non-settled poor in Chicago who were being maintained at public expense.⁷

The only other legislation enacted during this period before 1871 which needs to be reviewed is concerned with the form of government in Cook County. Since the rôle of the municipal government in the granting of assistance was an extra-legal one, it is not necessary to trace the development of its organization here. In general, it followed the familiar pattern of a common council and mayor with the gradual accretion of specialized departments as the needs of the city required. The only one of these departments of special interest here is the Board of Health whose organization will be noted in connection with the account of the care given the sick poor.

¹Ibid., sec. 1.

²Ibid., sec. 2.

³Ibid., sec. 13.

⁴Ibid., sec. 15.

⁵Laws of Illinois, 1840-41, sec. 1, p. 190.

⁶Ibid., 1861, sec. 1, p. 181.

⁷Chicago Daily American, September 28, 1839. See also below, pp. 47-50.

Cook County Government

The organization of government in Cook County presents an interesting example of the effects of a conflict between the two streams of migration which populated the state during its formative years. Illinois Territory was entered from the south by pioneers from Pennsylvania and Virginia, and it was these early settlers who helped to draft the first state constitution.¹ Having come from states where the county was the traditional unit of administration, they proceeded to graft the three commissioner system of Pennsylvania upon the new state, and in 1831 when Cook County was carved out of Peoria County, the management of county affairs was placed in the hands of three elected commissioners who constituted a county commissioner's court.²

This form of organization was entirely satisfactory until the second stream of settlers, recruited largely from New England and New York State, arrived and established themselves in the northern part of the state. Brought up on the tradition of the town meeting as the appropriate institution for the handling of local matters, they were reluctant to regard the county commissioner's court as an adequate substitute. By 1847, the town-county question had become a definite issue and was an important factor leading to the constitutional convention in that year.³ The devotion of the eastern settlers to their town meetings was recognized in the new constitution by directing the legislature to pass a law providing for the adoption of township form of government by such counties as might desire it,⁴ and in 1849 Cook County took advantage of the law that was duly passed.⁵

¹Samuel E. Sparling, Municipal History and Present Organization of the City of Chicago ("University of Wisconsin Economics, Political Science and History Series"; Madison, 1898), p. 136.

²Bessie Louise Pierce, A History of Chicago (New York, 1937), I, 33.

³Sparling, op. cit., p. 137.

⁴Constitution of the State of Illinois, 1848, Art. VII, p. 6, in Laws of 1849.

⁵Edmund J. James, The Early Charters of Chicago (Chicago, 1898), p. 129.

In the eighteen-year period between 1831 and 1849 during which time the county was governed by the county commissioner's court, there was a minimum of development in the way of special machinery for the administration of public relief. Until almost the end of this period, the three commissioners and the warden of the poorhouse were the only persons concerned with the granting of assistance. In the years between 1831, when the county was formed, and 1839, when a new poor law was passed, there was no provision for the office of overseer. As will be recalled, the 1839 law had authorized the appointment of overseers in those counties which did not have almshouses and permitted them to continue in office in the event there were cases requiring care outside the almshouse.¹ Since Cook County had built its first almshouse long before the passage of this law, there was no necessity for the appointment of overseers on that score, although since a considerable amount of "outdoor" relief was also given, it might be expected that overseers would be appointed. No evidence exists, however, to show that there were any such officers in Chicago before 1850 when the township organization act became effective.

The county commissioners and later the Board of Township Supervisors periodically undertook measures towards increased economy in the matter of poor relief--usually in the form of a resolution abolishing all outdoor relief--and it is to one of these early efforts that the creation of the office of county agent may be traced. Becoming concerned over the mounting costs of relief, the commissioners in December, 1847, determined not only to do away with home relief, which was then called "outdoor" relief, but also to scrutinize very carefully all applications for admission to the almshouse. To the then county clerk, George M. Davis, was assigned the task of investigating the merits of each application, an addition to his usual duties for which he received no extra compensation at that time.² By the following year Mr. Davis was submitting reports of his activities in this field signed Superintendent of the Poor and was exercising some

¹ See above, p. 5

² Chicago Daily Democrat, December 29, 1849; Gem of the Prairie, January 1, 1848.

supervision over the management of the poor house.¹ Whether he was now receiving a separate salary for this work is not known. When the reorganization of the county under township government was completed in 1850, this title had disappeared and the same duties were now being performed by a county agent--an official who was to have a long and important existence in Cook County.²

At an election held on November 6, 1849, Cook County adopted township organization and the management of county affairs now passed from the county commissioner's court to the board of supervisors. Under the new form of government each township elected a town supervisor in addition to certain other local officers; among these were overseers of the poor, one of whom was to be elected each year at the annual town meeting.³ These officials were to be accountable to the board of supervisors for their actions and were to be paid on a per diem basis.⁴ Management of the poor house and financial responsibility for all forms of poor relief was left with the county board, just as it had previously been with the commissioner's court. In short, what was contemplated (and carried out in the county outside of Chicago) was a system of poor relief financed by the county and administered by the towns.

The city of Chicago was divided into the North, South and West towns, and at the first election after the adoption of township organization held on April 2, 1850, overseers of the poor were duly elected for each of the three divisions.⁵ We have seen that the county agent was by 1851 exercising all of the functions in Chicago that were assigned to the overseers, so it is not clear just what these officials did. Their activities were never reported upon in any of the published proceedings of the board of supervisors; and since the office was abolished for the city of

¹Gem of the Prairie, September 15, 1848.

²Gaps in the newspaper files of this period and the fact that the proceedings of the board of supervisors were frequently not reported in full, makes it impossible to assign a definite date for the inauguration of this office.

³Laws of 1849, Art. III, sec. 2, p.

⁴Ibid., Art. XII, sec. 2.

⁵Gem of the Prairie, April 6, 1850.

Chicago in 1863,¹ it seems safe to assume that they never played a vital rôle in caring for Chicago's poor.

Within the board itself, committees varying from three to five members were appointed annually to deal with special functions of county government. One of these was the "Committee on Poor House and Paupers," and in view of the large proportion of the annual county budget spent for poor relief, it was one of the most important. To this committee were referred all questions of policy, and all expenditures of the township overseers had to be approved by this committee for payment. The warden, matron, and physician to the county poor house were elected by the board as a whole; but as will be seen, in all other matters concerning this institution, the committee exercised a great deal of unhampered authority.

¹Private Laws of Illinois, 1863, "Act of February 13th," c. xvii, sec. 21. In 1867, this office was abolished in all counties having township organization and the supervisors were made ex officio overseers of the poor (Illinois Laws of 1867, sec. 1, p. 172).

CHAPTER II

THE EXTENT OF DESTITUTION

Growth of the City

The years between 1830 and 1840 in the United States were characterized by a great westward movement of population. During this decade the population of the new State of Illinois increased more than that of all of the South Atlantic states combined,¹ and the population of the city of Chicago increased more than ten times.² Its strategic position at the foot of Lake Michigan and the construction of two canals were important factors in the growth of the city during these early years.

Even before 1830, the southern part of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois had a number of permanent settlements; however since overland travel by wagon was both hazardous and difficult, these settlements had tended to follow the course of the rivers, particularly the Ohio. When the Erie Canal was opened in 1825, an easier route westward was provided which was to redirect much of the flow of migration. With the advent of steam navigation on the Great Lakes in 1833, a continuous water route from New York to Chicago was available for migrants from New York and the New

¹Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History (New York, 1920), p. 193. Cited in Pierce, op. cit., p. 43.

²The population of Chicago for this period according to the best available statistics and most reliable estimates (see Pierce, op. cit., p. 44) was as follows:

1830	40-50	1836	3,820
1831	60	1837	4,170
1832	150	1838	4,000
1833	350	1839	4,200
1834	1,800	1840	4,470
1835	3,265		

The United States Census figures show the city continuing to grow at an almost unbelievable rate during the three decades between 1840 and 1870:

1850	29,963
1860	109,260
1870	298,977

England states and the settlement of the region around Fort Dearborn began in earnest.¹

The other waterway which was to play such an important part in the growth of the city was the Illinois and Michigan Canal. A water route connecting the eastern seaboard with the Mississippi Valley had been visualized as early as 1683 by Joliet, and President Madison had proposed its construction in 1814; but it was not until 1836 that work actually began. The federal government donated land to the State of Illinois in 1827 to aid in the construction of the canal, and in 1830 the town of Chicago was laid out and platted on this land by the canal commissioners. Lots were sold the same year and the prospective canal began to act as a powerful attraction for migrants.² Included among the newcomers were many who came, not as permanent settlers, but rather to speculate in canal lots. Harriet Martineau, the English writer and social reformer who came to Chicago during the summer of 1836, was much impressed with the infant city, but suspected rightly that there was something false about it all. She wrote:

I never saw a busier place than Chicago was at the time of our arrival. The streets were crowded with land speculators, hurrying from one sale to another. A negro, dressed up in scarlet, bearing a scarlet flag, and riding a white horse with housings of scarlet, announced the times of sale. At every street-corner where he stopped, the crowd flocked around him; and it seemed as if some prevalent mania infected the whole people. The rage for speculation might fairly be so regarded. . . . Of course, this rapid money-making is a merely temporary evil. A bursting of the bubble must come soon. The absurdity of the speculation is so striking, that the wonder is that the fever should have attained such a height as I witnessed. The immediate occasion of the bustle which prevailed, the week we were at Chicago, was the sale of lots, to the value of two millions of dollars, along the course of a projected canal; and of another set, immediately behind these.

Hotel accommodations during this boom period were at such

¹In 1833 four boats entered the Chicago harbor, a figure which jumped to one hundred and eight the next year and which reached four hundred and fifty by 1836. W. V. Pooley, The Settlement of Illinois from 1830 to 1850 (Madison, 1908), p. 358.

²Pierce, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

³Harriet Martineau, Society in America (3 vols.; London, 1837), I, 350-51.

a premium that Miss Martineau and her party were forced to accept the hospitality of private citizens. The wharves were crowded with newly arrived emigrants, many of whom had to sleep in warehouses until houses could be built for them. The press viewed all of this excitement with great satisfaction. In an editorial headed, "The Cry Is Still They Come," the proprietor of the Chicago American wrote:

The tide of emigration which is flowing in this season, far exceeds that of any former period. The flood gates of enterprize seem to be let loose upon us and multitudes are crowding on to this young land, as if the pestilence were behind, eager to find a better home, where they can build their fortunes and their hopes, and enjoy the plenty which our fat fields yield to the hand of industry. . . .¹

Immigrants

During 1836 many of the eastern newspapers carried advertisements for laborers to work on the new canal, and the identity of many of those who responded to the call is suggested by the announcement that, "About two hundred sons of the 'Emerald Isle' arrived on the Steamboat New York on Thursday Morning Last." The editor adding that "ten thousand more" were wanted.²

That any problem of destitution could emerge in this colorful and prosperous setting would probably have seemed fantastic to the sanguine editor who had invited the ten thousand Irishmen; however the financial panic which was precipitated in 1837 paralyzed business in the east. Although slow in reaching Chicago, the depression overtook the new city,³ and by early fall the exceedingly lean years that were not to end until 1842 had set in.⁴ Those who were able to leave town did so. but the great majority remained and the county commissioners were faced with their first

¹Chicago American, June 13, 1835. Another editor in writing on the same subject said, ". . . . We dare not venture on anticipation of the future. Reason looks on in astonishment and all calculation is abandoned" (Chicago Democrat, May 28, 1834).

²Chicago American, July 2, 1836.

³The city had been incorporated in March of that year. See Laws of Illinois, 1837, p. 50, Act of March 4, 1837.

⁴Pierce, op. cit., pp. 66-69.

real problem in poor relief.¹ Among those who remained were the unfortunate Irish immigrants who had accepted the editorial invitation in such large numbers to come out to work on the canal. To those already here were added their starving brothers who arrived during the 40's as a result of the crop failures in their native island. They were destitute when they arrived and many of them were to be frequent guests of the county from then on.²

Although the Irish were usually the most prominent national group in any relief statistics for this period, these impoverished canal workers were by no means the only persons in need of public charity. Despite the fact that the immigrants all looked "wealthy" and "enterprising" to the editor of the Democrat in 1834,³ the permanent settlers of Chicago were, for the most part, like their colonial forebears who settled America, poor people. They arrived with some household goods, but with very little in the way of cash reserves, and never enough to withstand long periods of unemployment such as characterized the period between 1837 and 1842. With the cessation of practically all building activity and the slowing down of work on the canal, there was general unemployment and much distress among the citizens. This construction was brought to a virtual standstill by March, 1841.

Another immigrant group which was frequently to need public help between 1833 and 1871 were the Germans. Like the Irish, many of them were attracted to Chicago during the late 'thirties by prospects of work on the canal. As early as 1846, they were

¹The item listed as "pauper expenses" in the county commissioner's accounts which had been \$27.67 in 1831, the year the county was organized, rose to \$1,954.02 in 1836 and nearly doubled the following year (\$3,421.65) under the impact of the financial collapse. See below, p. 25, n. 2, for table of pauper expenses for this period.

²Chicago Democrat, May 28, 1834.

³In the census of "Paupers in Almshouses" taken by the U. S. Bureau of the Census in 1904, 1910, and 1923, the Irish were still the largest foreign group represented. For the country as a whole the figures are:

Year	Total (Native and Foreign Born)	Irish
1904	32,136	14,923
1910	33,353	11,906
1923	23,557	6,161

here in sufficiently large numbers to justify the publication of a German newspaper, the Chicago Volksfreund, and by 1850 they made up 17 per cent of the total population.¹ Although they too came as a consequence of economic pressure and political unrest at home, as a whole they were a less destitute group who were better able to gain a foothold in their new surroundings than were the Irish. Less destitute to begin with, they frequently had trade skills which could be utilized in the building of the new city. Their representation on the relief rolls, although substantial, was somewhat more in proportion to their numbers in the total population.

TABLE 1

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF IRISH AND GERMANS RECEIVING
PUBLIC RELIEF IN COOK COUNTY
DECEMBER, 1869 TO March, 1870*

Type of Relief	Total Number Receiving Relief	Number of Irish	Percentage of Irish	Number of Germans	Percentage of Germans
Out-door relief	14,060	6,840	48.6	2,965	21.0
Almshouse.....	759	390	51.3	125	16.4

*Data for almshouse relief taken from "Report of the Warden of the Poor House," Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of Cook County, March session, 1870. Appendix, p. 73. Those for out-door relief are from "Report of the County Agent," ibid., p. 72.

The proportions of Irish and Germans receiving relief during a representative quarter are shown in Table 1. The percentages shown here should be compared with the general population percentages for 1870 shown in Table 2. It will be seen that the Irish, while accounting for only 13.4 per cent of the general population, represented nearly half of the total numbers receiving relief. In the case of the Germans, these proportions tend to be the same.

From the Scandinavian countries, the Norwegians were the

¹Pierce, op. cit., p. 183.

TABLE 2

PROPORTION OF FOREIGN BORN OF SELECTED NATIONALITIES TO
TOTAL POPULATION IN CHICAGO, 1850-1870

Country	1870 ^a		1860 ^a		1850 ^b	
	Number	Percent- age	Number	Percent- age	Number	Percent- age
Total population	298,977		109,260		29,963	
England and Wales.....	10,592	3.5	4,576	4.2	1,883	6.3
Ireland.....	39,988	13.4	19,889	18.2	6,096	20.3
Scotland.....	4,197	1.4	1,641	1.5	610	2.0
Germany.....	52,316	17.5	22,230	20.3	5,094	17.0
France.....	1,418	0.5	883	0.8	234	0.8
Denmark.....	1,243	0.4	150	0.1	.....	.....
Sweden.....	6,154	2.1	816	0.7	.....	.....
Norway.....	6,373	2.1	1,313	1.2	.....	.....
Canada.....	8,936	3.0	1,867	1.7	.....	.....
Bohemia.....	6,277	2.1	.....	.....	.....	.....
Italy.....	552	0.2	100	0.1	4	(c)
Poland.....	1,205	0.4	109	0.1	.....	.....
Switzerland.	1,226	0.4	503	0.5	.....	.....

^aData taken from United States Census returns.

^bData taken from Statistical View of the United States
..... Being a Compendium of the Seventh Census (J.D.B. DeBow,
comp.) (Washington, 1854).

^cLess than 0.1 of 1 per cent.

first to come in large numbers, although by the end of the period under review, there were over six thousand Swedes in the city and in the Chicago area they comprised 7.7 per cent of the total population.¹ It was this group which suffered particularly from sickness. Ship fever and cholera removed the heads of many of the Swedish immigrant families leaving widows and orphans to be cared for by public and private charity.²

It is not proposed here to trace the arrival of the other

¹Helen R. Jeter, Trends of Population in the Region of Chicago (Chicago, 1927), p. 35.

²See below, sections on "The Sick Poor" and "Dependent Children."

foreign groups which helped to settle Chicago, nor to discuss the various factors which brought them to the attention of the public relief authorities. Such a discussion would require an analysis both of the city's economic development and of social and political conditions existing abroad during this period. The principal nationalities in the city for three decades and the shifts which took place in their ratios to the total population are shown in Table 2. The influx from Southern Europe had not yet begun although this was to be the most fruitful source of migration in the years of reconstruction following the fire in 1871.

Causes of Destitution

Destitution as a result of unemployment cut across national lines, and in a time of widespread depression such as occurred in 1858, all of these nationalities were represented in the poor-house and in the soup lines which formed on Madison Street.¹ Another threat to the economic security of all of these early inhabitants were the periodic epidemics of cholera which swept over the city. The mortality was always high and frequently the only survivors from the disease were the children of the family. The numbers of these orphaned children mounted so high during the epidemic of 1849, that they could not be cared for at the county poor house, and it was to meet these needs that the Chicago Orphan Asylum was established in that year.²

Then as now it is difficult and perhaps dangerous to attempt to distinguish any generally prevailing attitude on the part of the public towards the poor. It is probable that so long as the "Poor House and Pauper's Account" in the county's annual financial statement did not rise alarmingly not much thought was given to them; although even when this item increased rapidly, as it did in 1838, there was no complaining, for the causes of destitution at this time were not complicated and they could be readily understood. So obvious and compelling, indeed, was the plight of the poor that winter that Mayor B. W. Raymond let himself be persuaded to turn over his entire year's salary for their use through the "lugubrious jeremiads of want" and the "sweet brogued

¹See below, pp. 41-42.

²Chicago Daily Democrat, August 9, 11, and September 15, 1849. Also see "Dependent Children" below.

blarney" of the Irish canal workers.¹ As always, poor children were appealing objects of charity and efforts made on their behalf by private groups were warmly applauded in the press.²

It was when the costs of relief rose unaccompanied by any public calamity or other acceptable and easily understood cause that a harsher attitude was manifested. Failure to appreciate the more complex causes of destitution and a thoroughgoing lack of sympathy for poverty traceable to personal defects, took the form it had had in England more than a hundred years before and still frequently has in this country: Relief must be made deterrent. A policy similar to the English "Workhouse Test" of 1722 was adopted by the board of supervisors on at least two occasions, in 1848 and 1858, when the offer of the "house" was made the test of need.³ Schemes to make the poor miserable by publishing their names⁴ or requiring task work⁵ were other ways of discouraging any but the most wretched. Fortunately these experiments in deterrence were found to be impracticable and were usually short lived, and it seems likely that the poor were most of the time accepted as inevitable, as were the taxes levied to support them.

¹Chicago Magazine, I (April, 1857), 121-22.

²Daily Democrat, August 9, September 15, 1849.
Daily Democratic Press, November 11, 1852; October 20, 1854.
Weekly Democrat, November 26, 1853.

³Daily Democrat, January 1, 1848; Gem of the Prairie, December 16, 1848; Chicago Daily Journal, March 10, 1858. Also see below, "Out-door Relief."

⁴Gem of the Prairie, September 15, 1848.

⁵Chicago Weekly Democrat, January 1, 1860.

CHAPTER III

THE ALMSHOUSE

Early Buildings

The first almshouse in Cook County was conveniently located to meet the needs of the unfortunate in Chicago who might be sent there. It was built on the town square at the corner of what is now Clark and Randolph Streets.¹ Just when this building was constructed is not certain, but that it was already in existence by 1835 is evidenced by an item in the statement of Cook County expenses for that year: "By cash \$1071.23 for paupers and poor house estate."² The jail, estray pen, record office and engine house shared the same site, all of them temporary rough lumber structures which were said to be "a detriment to the beauty of the square."³

Nothing is known of the management of this early institution but a strong suggestion of its lack of physical comforts is to be found in two letters published in one of the newspapers of that day. The first of these reviews the rapid growth of the town and stresses the importance of having governmental agencies keep pace with this development. After discussing the deficiencies in the police and educational systems, the writer says:

It is apparent also, that some institution, in which the sick, the insane and the unfortunate of every class, can receive better attention than a common poor house affords, is greatly to be desired. It is to the instituting of an establishment of this kind, to the erecting and putting in operation a General Hospital or Dispensary, that I desire to call the attention of the public.⁴

¹Chicago American, October 15, 1836.

²Ibid., May 21, 1836.

³Ibid., October 15 and December 31, 1836.

⁴See the letter signed "D.B.," ibid., January 1, 1837.

Two weeks later in the columns of the same paper this letter was answered by someone who said he was

quite convinced that our present Almshouse is quite inadequate in size, to the comfortable accommodation of its inmates, and trust that measures will, ere long, be taken for the erection of an Hospital. The crowding of half a dozen sick persons into a small, ill ventilated apartment, savors little of charity, and it indeed behooves us on whom fortune has smiled, to soothe the afflictions of those who quail beneath her frown.¹

This first poorhouse stood until 1841 when a new one was built at a cost of \$700, money for which was borrowed from Mr. E. R. Bowen.² The new building was located in Lake Township, about five miles south of the city on the shores of the lake,³ and upon its completion in the fall of the year, it was visited by the members of a grand jury committee who expressed themselves as being satisfied with the new almshouse. They took "great pleasure in expressing [their] approbation of this method of providing for the support of the poor," and believed that "much expense would be thereby saved to the county, and the condition of the poor much improved."⁴ A man and his wife were employed to be warden and matron of the house at an annual salary which amounted

¹ See letter signed "R," ibid., January 28, 1837.

² Daily American, October 30, 1841.

³ This farm of 160 acres extended from the present Cottage Grove Avenue to Lake Michigan and from 40th to 43d Streets. It was leased to the City of Chicago in 1855 after the Cook County Almshouse had been moved to Jefferson. The old almshouse buildings which were used by the city for the first Reform School were destroyed by fire in 1857. In 1865, the County Commissioners agreed to let the city have this property rent free in exchange for the use of the old city hospital at 18th and Arnold Streets. (See below, p. 66.) This arrangement continued until 1871 when the State Reform School was established at Pontiac at which time the city transferred all the inmates to this new institution and abandoned its own school. The land was subsequently sold at auction at various times between 1872 and 1889 and the proceeds used to help pay for the construction of the second county hospital and the county's share of the court house. Annual Statement of the Cook County Commissioners, 1879-80, p. 8; Proceedings of the Cook County Commissioners, 1888-89, p. 680; W. A. Goodspeed and D. D. Healy, History of Cook County Illinois (Chicago, 1909), I, 267, 534.

⁴ Daily American, October 30, 1841.

to \$350 by 1850.¹

By 1847, this building was not large enough to accommodate all of the poor and many were turned away, while those who were already inmates suffered "intensely" from overcrowding.² This situation grew worse the following year when all home relief was abolished. The continuance of this policy through 1851 finally made it imperative that the board of supervisors take some action and in March, 1852, they bought a new site for a poor farm.³ Nothing was done, however, about building a house on this farm and by 1853 the conditions at the old poorhouse were such as to warrant a grand jury investigation. The report of this investigation suggests the miserable existence led by the inmates:

. . . . The Poor House is entirely inadequate to the wants of this county for the healthful and convenient accommodation of so large a number as our county agent finds it necessary to lodge and feed here. We find from 130 to 140 inmates--some 40 sick, and a large number quite infirm. From the number of inmates, and the limited space in the buildings, we find the rooms literally filled with beds, and badly ventilated; the sick and the well necessarily thrown to-gether, making it extremely unpleasant for both. The want of more room is more particularly apparent in the apartment appropriated to the women with children, which, although kept quite neat and clean, is so crowded as to be very offensive to one going to and from the open air.

The occupants say they have plenty of good wholesome food, and make no complaint, except such as arises from the temporary inconvenience arising from the removing of the old Superintendent, and the coming in of another, which occurred the day we were there.⁴

As a result of this investigation, work was very shortly started on the buildings for the new poor farm. The eighty acres which had been purchased for \$1,200 in 1852 were located on the Northwestern Plank Road (now Milwaukee Avenue) about nine miles northwest of the city in Jefferson Township, the site which is now occupied by the Chicago State Hospital and known as Dunning.⁵

¹Goodspeed and Healy, op. cit., I, 528.

²Chicago Daily Journal, December 29, 1847.

³Goodspeed and Healy, op. cit., I, 534.

⁴Chicago Weekly Democrat, February 19, 1853.

⁵Goodspeed and Healy, op. cit., I, 534. The poor farm was included in Norwood Park when Jefferson Township was divided in

A three story brick building, one hundred by forty feet in dimension, with basement was erected as the main building. Connected with it was a wing of two stories designed as an insane department. Various outbuildings necessary for the operation of the farm completed the original plant.¹ The total cost of this construction was \$26,608.15.²

When the buildings were completed in the early part of December, 1854, the ladies of Jefferson Township who had taken considerable interest in the new institution decided to have a house-warming. The local newspapers made fun of this idea and when the party was actually given, one of the editors in an editorial headed "Opening a Poor House with a Ball" wrote: "The tables were spread, groaning under a sumptuous repast, and when the candles were lighted, a band of music struck up a lively strain, and for several hours the old and young of the neighborhood poured in at the open doors, and the county Poor House enjoyed as good a 'house warming' as ever any builder of a new home for his family can desire."³

A few days later the board of supervisors authorized the purchase of a new wagon specially for the purpose, and the "paupers" at the old house, 25 men, 27 women, and 24 children, were hauled the fifteen miles to the new building.⁴ A committee from the board was appointed to inspect the building and report on the transfer. From the report which was submitted, it was apparent that the committee feared that the poor were being made too comfortable and that "pauperism" would be encouraged: "There were

1872, and became known as Dunning in 1882 when a spur of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad was built at the expense of the county to serve the poorhouse and insane asylum. The station was named Dunning in honor of D. S. Dunning, an early and prosperous settler, who owned a farm adjacent to the poor farm. The county almshouse and insane asylum remained here until 1911-12 when the Cook County Infirmary was opened at Oak Forest and the insane asylum was taken over by the state. A. T. Andreas, History of Cook County, Illinois (Chicago, 1884), pp. 483-84.

¹Daily Democratic Press, December 14, 1854.

²Chicago Weekly Times, June 14, 1855.

³Daily Democratic Press, December 11, 1854.

⁴Ibid., December 15, 1854.

among them some persons who presented by their fine garments rather a respectable appearance, and yet did not seem to be ashamed to remain in a poor house, nor had they apparently, any business there, except to wait upon each other." Several coal stoves had been set up and were "in full blast in many of the bed rooms, thus consuming for the benefit of a few paupers, as much coal as would be sufficient for all belonging to each ward or class." The committee also found fault with the food objecting that "the paupers had an abundant supply of fresh roast beef" for dinner where salt beef and pork might better have been used. The result of this inspection visit was to convince the members of the committee that "the present system for the support of the poor is very loose and imperfect and liable to great waste."¹ After the presentation of this report a resolution was adopted ordering one member of the Committee on Poor House and Paupers to visit the almshouse each week to make certain that the wishes of the board were being carried out--this visit to be made "without previous notice being given to the Warden."

Management of the poorhouse was in the hands of a warden and matron who acted under the direction of the Committee on Poor House and Paupers. The man and his wife who held this position at the new institution were at first paid a joint annual salary of \$600,² an amount that was later increased to \$1,000.³ A physician and a janitor completed the regular paid staff at this time.

Supervision by the board of supervisors was effected through frequent visits to the institution by the Committee on Poor House and Paupers supplemented by the annual visit of inspection by the entire board. As is frequently the case with such inspection visits, they appear to have been little more than an outing. In 1863, after a "pleasant ride of two hours," the party arrived and was fed a dinner of "oysters, turkeys, chicken, beef, mutton, pork and 'infinite pastry.'"⁴ The real nature of

¹Ibid., December 14, 1854.

²Chicago Weekly Times, June 12, 1856.

³Proceedings of the Cook County Board of Supervisors, 1866, p. 18 (hereafter referred to as Proceedings).

⁴Tribune, December 9, 1863.

these visits was appreciated by one of the supervisors who doubted whether the \$125 spent for carriage hire, the \$75 spent for dinner and the \$100 for the per diem of the members actually benefited the county. So ridiculous did he make the whole performance appear, that he was able to have a resolution adopted doing away with these visits.¹

Early Corruption and Mismanagement

When unscrupulous members were appointed to the Committee on Poor House and Paupers or dishonest persons elected by the board to the office of warden or physician, the poor were the victims. Much of the ensuing misery and suffering probably went unnoticed, but occasionally the mismanagement and neglect of duties achieved such scandalous proportions that it reached the public press. One of the early scandals centered around the accidental discovery by a candidate for the office of warden that a thriving business in "pauper bodies" was being conducted by the warden and physician of the poorhouse. Packed in barrels labeled pork, Cook County pauper bodies were being sold to the medical college at Ann Arbor, Michigan and it was rumored that Rush Medical Institute was regularly receiving its share from the same source.² The humanitarian ends which might be served by this practice carried no weight with the supervisors who discharged the warden for "palpable dereliction of duty" and gave orders that the new appointee should be present at all post mortem examinations.³

Although there was no intimation that any members of the Committee shared in the profits of the commerce in "pauper bodies," there was evidence later in the same year (1857) that one of the members of the Committee was indulging in a particularly mean type of dishonesty. Upon admission to the poorhouse, the inmates were required to turn over any money or small possessions with which they might arrive, and it became clear that this member, James Michie, was appropriating these for his own use. It also

¹Proceedings, 1867, p. 2.

²Chicago Weekly Democrat, June 13, 1857.

³Ibid., June 20, 1857.

appeared that the amounts paid by relatives for the boarding of insane patients was also being short circuited into Mr. Michie's pockets.¹

This first example of the misuse of relief funds appears insignificant when compared with the graft which was to be practiced by individual experts in the middle 'seventies or the systematic operations of the famous "boodle" ring in the 'eighties.² It is worth noting, however, that even at this early date the county's charitable institutions were not immune to looting by dishonest politicians.

Complaints in 1870 that "bad meat, poor flour and miserable bread" were being furnished the poorhouse resulted in the appointment of a special committee of the board of supervisors to investigate these charges. This committee reported that they had "fully established that good meat, good bread and good flour were the rule, and poor the exception"; however they cautiously add that it is their opinion that "the interest of the county is not promoted by contracting for supplies with county officers on general principles."³ This evidence of petty graft within the board of supervisors was dwarfed by the larger scale operations of J.J. Kearney, president of the board, which came to light a few months later. It was proved that he had accepted bribes for influencing the location of the Cook County Normal School and had profited handsomely in the awarding of contracts for the construction of a new building for the insane at the poor farm. This latter piece of dishonesty cost the county over \$6,000 and delayed for several months the completion of the new building which was so urgently needed to relieve the cruel overcrowding in the department provided for the insane.⁴

At the end of this period one of the commissioners of the newly created Board of State Charities said that he was "informed upon very good authority, that as a class, the public charities of Cook County appear to have been instituted for the benefit of the officers managing them"; a statement which unfortunately

¹Ibid., December 19, 1857. ²See below,

³Proceedings, March Session, 1870, p. 2.

⁴Ibid., p. 20; September Session, 1870, pp. 21-22.

somewhat substantiated the incidents described.¹

Since the amounts spent for the maintenance of the poor at the almshouse were scarcely ever differentiated in the early financial statements from those for outdoor relief, it is not possible to know what the annual costs of these institutions were.² For one of the few periods for which these data are available, the total cost of operating the poorhouse for the first quarter of 1867 (December 1st to March 1st) was reported by the Committee on Poor House and Paupers to have been \$6,744.69,³ while for the fourth quarter of the same year it was said to have been \$3,337.84.⁴ The "house" was the winter refuge for many who

¹Illinois Board of State Charities, Biennial Report, 1870 (Springfield), p. 168.

²The following statement of county expenditures for all forms of poor relief for the period 1831-1849 was compiled at the time of a grand jury investigation of county finances (Goodspeed, op. cit., p. 525). An earlier accounting covering the ten-year period 1831-1841 showed somewhat different figures for several of the corresponding years, so that the amounts should not be regarded as completely accurate (Chicago Daily American, October 30, 1841). Total county expenditures are given to show the large proportion spent for poor relief. For the entire eighteen year period, this item accounted for 29.5 per cent of the total amount spent.

Year	Pauper Expenses	Total Expenses
1831	\$ 27	\$ 424
1832	218	661
1833	244	2,304
1834	369	1,040
1835	1,062	3,322
1836	1,954	5,323
1837	3,421	6,135
1838	3,611	11,172
1839	3,125	9,614
1840	4,318	15,064
1841	5,183	14,067
1842	2,187	9,002
1843	1,483	9,841
1844	1,568	9,916
1845	2,103	13,402
1846	3,825	15,504
1847	14,213	27,405
1848	4,282	17,821
1849	5,810	22,898

³Proceedings, March Session, 1867, p. 20.

⁴Ibid., December Session, 1867, p. 18.

were able to get along outside during the warmer months; the population frequently doubling between September and December. Occasionally during the closing years of the period there were attempts to arrive at per capita costs; however these figures which professed to account for even fractions of a cent give an impression of accuracy not warranted by the facts.¹

The Almshouse Population²

The publication in a newspaper of the names of the poor gives the first definite information as to the composition of the almshouse population. In September, 1848, the County Commissioners state that,

The names, ages and diseases of those at present in the almshouse are as follows:³

<u>Names</u>	<u>Ages</u> (Adults)	<u>Diseases</u>
John Grouarty	55	Sore eyes
John Sullivan	50	Sore leg
John Driscoll	47	Infirm
John Sullivan	32	Sore leg
John Fraey	33	Rheumatism
James McLane	30	Sore eyes
James Hassy	32	Infirm
Mrs. Pullen	50	do.
Br. Riley	18	Fits
James Mein	50	Infirm
F. Freitney	27	Fever
R. Kearns	28	Sore leg
Ed. Quin	40	Lame arm
T. Mann	30	Fever
T. Baker	50	Infirm
Mrs. Brislan	40	Destitute
Hannah Maloners	22	Cripple
Sarah Born	26	Destitute
Thomas Chivers	55	Feeble
John Gerhope	35	Fever
Wm. Hazertu	33	Fever
John McNulty	55	Rheumatism
C. Beecher	70	Ague
G. Church	39	do.
Wm. Church	39	do.

¹In March, 1867, the Committee on Poor House and Paupers reported that "The cost of each inmate for one day has been twenty-five cents, 5 mills and five-tenths of a mill:" a figure derived by the simple expedient of dividing the average population of the house into the total of approved bills for the quarter.

²Children in the almshouse are discussed in another section. See below, p. 32, "Dependent Children."

³Gem of the Prairie, September 15, 1848.

One is at first struck by the comparative youthfulness of the inmates; with one exception none being over fifty-five. It should be remembered, however, that at this time the town had been settled for only fifteen years and that the population as a whole still included but few old people. A report ten years later showed a much higher percentage of persons over sixty years of age.¹ Another striking fact is that of the entire group, only two are shown to be destitute; this despite the fact that little or no outdoor relief was being given in that year.

The reports of the physician at the poorhouse in which are listed the diseases treated and the causes of death confirm the impression that, for the most part, it was the old, the sick and the insane that were sent there.² Syphilis, paralysis, shaking palsy, "general debility," and consumption were constantly recurring items in these reports. The winter months always found some able bodied in the poorhouse, but they could escape in the spring and did escape, as the statistics show.

In 1870, the State Board of Charities issued its first report, and in it included a tabular statement of the "Physical, Intellectual and Moral Condition of Paupers in the Almshouses of Illinois." For the Cook County institution they show:³

Unable to labor	150
Partly able	195
Idiotic and insane	144
Deaf	1
Blind	10
Crippled	12
Sick	40
Can read and write	97
Can read only	47
Neither read nor write	201
Habitually intemperate	115
Have been in prison	...
Have been worth \$1,000	10

Needless to say this "study" should be regarded as suggestive rather than as wholly accurate. Out of the total number, 345,

¹Chicago Daily Journal, September 15, 1858.

²In his report for March, 1870, the almshouse physician refers to the inmates as "the scum and dregs of broken-down and dilapidated humanity, putrid with the most filthy diseases that human flesh is heir to" (Proceedings, March, 1870, p. 76).

³Illinois State Board of Charities, Biennial Report, 1870, p. 196.

none is reported as being able for work and nearly 50 per cent are shown as mental patients.

Before 1869, no comparable statistics covering nationalities and turnover in population at the poorhouse were published. Between September 15, 1851, and January 15, 1853, the county agent reported that he had sent 399 persons to the almshouse, of whom 223 were Irish, 92 German, 25 American and the balance divided among six other nationalities.¹ Two reports of the Committee on Poor House and Paupers in 1858 show the ratios of the three leading national groups remaining fairly constant: In March there were 239 Irish, 87 Germans, and 27 Americans,² while in September there were 203 Irish, 71 Germans, and 26 Americans.³

TABLE 3

NATIONALITY OF INMATES OF COOK COUNTY POORHOUSE
FOR THE PERIOD SEPTEMBER 1-DECEMBER 1, 1859*

Country of Birth	Number	Per Cent
All countries.....	610	100.0
Ireland.....	321	52.6
Germany.....	110	18.0
Sweden.....	16	11.1
United States.....	46	7.5
England.....	20	3.3
Scotland.....	11	2.0
Canada.....	10	1.6
France.....	9	1.5
Norway.....	6	1.0
Denmark.....	6	1.0
Bohemia.....	3	0.5

*Data taken from report of Warden of Poorhouse for this period.

The nationalities of the inmates of the poorhouse for a three-month period in 1869 are shown in Table 3. For the purpose of comparison it should be said that in 1870 the Irish represented

¹Chicago Daily Times, January 19, 1853.

²Chicago Daily Journal, March 11, 1858.

³Ibid., September 15, 1858.

13.4 per cent and the Germans 17.5 per cent of the total population of Chicago.¹ From this it may be assumed that the Irish had not yet recovered from the economic handicaps with which they arrived in Chicago. The only other group present in sufficient numbers to warrant any conclusions were the Swedes whose representation at the poorhouse was considerably higher than their proportion (2.05 per cent) of the total population.

Movement of population in the almshouse followed the familiar cycle of an influx in the fall and winter months and an exodus in the spring, with always a back log of the old, the insane, and the sick who could not escape. For an unspecified quarter in 1870, the number of such permanent inmates was given as three hundred.²

Employing the Poor

Of all the theories touching on the management of the poor, perhaps the most persistent has been that they should be employed and if possible made to earn the cost of their maintenance. This idea has perennial appeal both for those who have the interest of the poor at heart and also for those who believe that poverty can be "discouraged." It is unlikely that the public officials of Chicago at this time knew anything about the unsuccessful attempts in this direction made by the English poor authorities during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but even had they been familiar with this chapter in English philanthropy, it is equally improbable that they would have been discouraged from trying their hand at it, for it always sounds like a good idea.

Although there were suggestions for the employment of the poor outside the poorhouse prior to 1870, all of the schemes which were actually tried out were carried on within this institution. In 1859, a resolution was offered requesting the Committee on Poor House and Paupers to "procure all the information from similar older institutions in regards to the management of the same with a view to the introduction of some system of light labor to be

¹See Table 2 above, p. 15.

²Illinois State Board of Charities, Biennial Report, 1870, p. 194.

pursued by the inmates of our Poor House, to lessen so far as possible the expense of keeping the same. . . ."¹ This resolution was shortly followed by an editorial in one of the leading newspapers headed, "Can the Poor House Be Made a Self Sustaining Institution?" This statement is so revealing of the popular misconception of the difficulties involved that it is given in some detail.

Lately visiting the County Poor House and Farm, near this city, we were impressed with the fact that there was in that institution a vast amount of idle and unproductive muscle.

Our readers are no doubt aware that the Poor House is divided into two departments.--In one department the insane paupers are kept; the other is devoted to the use of those whose losses and deprivations have not extended to the loss of reason, and who, whatever may be the course of the wind, know a hawk from a handsaw.

Some of the sane paupers were usefully and profitably employed; but the great majority of them had nothing to do, and did it. Of the two classes, the insane were by all odds the most active. Their employment was perhaps not very useful, and some of their performances were certainly not ornamental, but they were unquestionably more industrious than the majority of their rational fellow-pensioners upon public charity.

The tax payers of Cook County have always been very heavily taxed for the support of that class of people whom that sagacious old lady, Mrs. Partington, aptly denominated as the "indignant poor." They have bought for this class of tax eaters a large and fertile farm, and have erected upon it a mansion, which for extent, comfort and convenience is not excelled by any institution in the West.

The editor agreed that the feeding and clothing of the "paupers" was probably necessary, but thought that the poorhouse should be made "to pay its own expenses"; either by the organization of some sort of manufacture within the institution or by "auctioning off" the labor of the inmates to the highest bidder. In his opinion the whole matter was simply one of teaching habits of industry to the inmates of the house who "apparently know nothing, save how to eat and drink."² As is so frequently the case when such proposals are made, it was assumed that the majority of the almshouse population are able-bodied persons whereas the exact opposite is usually true, and was in this instance as

¹Chicago Daily Journal, December 8, 1859.

²Chicago Weekly Democrat, January 7, 1860.

has been shown.¹

It is impossible to judge how much effect this editorial had, but a year or two later flax was being raised² and a section of the poorhouse was designated as the "loom department" where the flax was spun and woven into cloth. This cloth was made up into sheets, quilts and bed ticks which were used at the house with sometimes a small surplus to be sent to the county jail. Various articles of clothing were also manufactured, some of which were sent to the county agent for distribution although most of it was used at the institution. The brooms for the courthouse also came from the poorhouse. In no case was the output impressive, but that any sort of industry could be carried on in an institution harboring such a large percentage of sick and decrepit people is remarkable.

A proposal was made in 1869 to employ men receiving relief from the county agent's office in breaking stone on the public roads, a plan that was never carried out.³ Later the same year a workhouse in connection with the county poorfarm was projected with the hope that it would "furnish an effectual check to the increase of Pauperism in this community."⁴

Two years later a new Committee on Poor House and Paupers reported:

Your Committee have bestowed much thought upon the matter of utilizing the labor of the paupers, including the able-bodied insane, during the winter months especially, for the fact stares us in the face, that if actual pauperism is not on the increase in our county, assumed pauperism is, and with 847 inmates at the Poor House last winter, we may reasonably expect a larger number next, and unless measures are taken to compel all such as are able to labor, to do so, you may look for a still greater increase of assumed pauperism in the future, and your Committee are thoroughly persuaded, that it is practicable to organize a system of labor, by which the

¹See above, pp. 26-28.

²In 1862, flax to make two hundred yards of cloth was raised on the poorhouse farm, which had by this time been increased to 157 acres. In the same year 1,000 bushels of potatoes, 100 bushels of onions, 60 of navy beans and 900 bushels of beets were harvested by the male inmates along with oats, hay, etc. to feed the stock that was kept (Goodspeed, op. cit., p. 547).

³Proceedings, June, 1869, p. 47.

⁴Ibid., December, 1869, p. 67.

services of every able-bodied man (and perhaps the women also) can be contracted per diem or week, so as to incur no outlay or expense on the part of the county other than in providing suitable shops or work rooms, and such extra overseers among those insane persons as may be employed, and thus a revenue obtained, which shall go far towards defraying the current expenses of both the Insane Asylum and the Poor House, and while we have no definite plan to propose and recommend to this Board for adoption at this time, we still think it a matter of importance, and one which commends itself to your candid consideration.¹

In these recurring projects for setting the poor to work, a regular cycle can be discerned. Each election brought in a new set of officials, unacquainted with the work, who were usually moved to attack the problem after the peak load of the winter months had caused relief costs to soar. That the various schemes which were enthusiastically discussed for a few meetings were always abandoned was undoubtedly due to the enforced recognition of the difficulties and expense involved which came when an attempt was made to put them into operation. Unfortunately the disillusionment attendant upon this discovery was never made a part of the record, and so until the end of the period, there were regularly recurring projects for discouraging pauperism and making the sick and insane inmates of the poorhouse pay their way.

Dependent Children

Until nearly the end of the century, public care of dependent children in Chicago is, for the most part, merely another chapter in the history of the almshouse. Illinois had developed neither the county children's homes which were to be found in Ohio nor, except for the Soldiers Orphans Home, no large state institution such as the one which had been established in Michigan, and it has only been in recent years that children have been removed from the almshouse by law.²

Two forms of care were contemplated in all the early laws: apprenticeship and the almshouse. Until 1848, there is no record of the indenture of dependent children in Cook County, although since provision had been made in all of the poor laws for this

¹Ibid., June, 1871, p. 22.

²Laws of Illinois, 1919, p. 697.

type of care it is probable that some use had been made of it before this time. In other northern Illinois counties whose archives have been preserved, there are dockets of indentures which indicate that the device was in common use during the 'thirties.¹ The fact that Cook County had an almshouse which could be used as an asylum for poor children much earlier than these other counties may explain the apparent limited use of apprenticeship. Between March 1 and September 1, 1849, nine children from the county poorhouse were bound out.² Subsequent reports from this institution make no mention of the numbers indentured.

Along with the twenty-five adults at the poorhouse whose names were published in the Gem of the Prairie in 1848, were listed thirteen children between the ages of one and thirteen, all of whom were said "to receive instruction daily."³ A few months later, twenty-seven of the sixty-one inmates were children--this high percentage being due to the cholera epidemic which was particularly severe in 1848 and 1849.⁴ Although a school room had been set aside for the children in the second poorhouse, no teacher was appointed to take charge of them until 1859 after the institution had been moved to Jefferson Township.⁵

Some intimation of the accommodations provided for children is to be found in the report of the grand jury which investigated the almshouse in 1853. After describing the whole house as being "entirely inadequate" they state that "the section devoted to women and children is so crowded as to be very offensive."⁶ Aside from an occasional expenditure for school books, the only mention of the children in the Proceedings is a resolution offered on Christmas Eve 1869 authorizing the Committee on Poor House and

¹Pease, op. cit. See sections on Peoria, St. Clair, and DuPage Counties.

²Gem of the Prairie, September 15; December 16, 1848.

³September 15, 1848.

⁴Gem of the Prairie, December 1, 1849.

⁵Chicago Daily Journal, December 9, 1858; March 8, 1859.

⁶Weekly Democrat, February 19, 1853.

Paupers to "expend not exceeding the sum of twenty-five dollars for the purpose of giving the children at the County Poor House the usual Christmas treat."¹ Evidence of what the "usual Christmas treat" was appears a little later in a bill for twenty dollars worth of hard candy.²

The cholera epidemic of 1849 left so many orphans in its wake that it became impossible to pack any more children into the already overcrowded poorhouse. In August while the epidemic was at its height, the Orphan Benevolent Association was formed to consider what should be done in the emergency. At the same time religious organizations made efforts to care for children of their own faith by publishing in the newspapers appeals for private homes in which children could be apprenticed. Among the most active in this latter group was the Rev. Mr. Unonius of the Scandinavian Church, for it was the Swedish and Norwegian immigrants arriving in large numbers at this time, who were specially subject to the disease.³

The Orphan Benevolent Association sponsored concerts, teas, and fairs to raise funds and on September 11, 1849 the first home of the Chicago Orphan Asylum was opened on Michigan Avenue between Lake and Water Streets.⁴ The charter which was granted a few months later was the model for other child caring societies which were organized a little later.⁵ The object of the institution was the "protecting, relieving, educating of, and providing means of support and maintenance for orphan and destitute children."⁶ The management was placed in the hands of a board of trustees who were given authority to indenture children according to the laws governing apprenticeship.⁷ The most inter-

¹December, 1869, p. 62. ²Ibid., March, 1870, p. 36.

³Daily Democrat, August 9, 1849; August 14, 1850. The extremely high mortality among the Norwegians who had colonized in the "North Division" of the town was not explained until later when it was discovered that "all had used water from the same well into which the drainings of an outhouse had found their way" (Colbert's Chicago: Historical and Statistical Sketch of the Garden City [Chicago, 1868], p. 18).

⁴Wheeler, op. cit., p. 13.

⁵Private Laws of Illinois, Act of November 5, 1849.

⁶Ibid., sec. 2.

⁷Ibid., sec. 7.

esting provision was that giving the mayor of Chicago legal guardianship "in all cases where it is not known that there is within the State any person legally authorized to act in the premises. . . ."¹ Of the 472 children admitted during the ten years between 1852 and 1861 inclusive, 189 or 44.3 per cent were committed under this provision.² In thus establishing the institution as a semi-public resource, the basis was laid for the requests that were shortly forthcoming for a public subsidy. The willingness of the organization to take not only children who would otherwise have had to be squeezed into the almshouse, but also to remove numbers of those already there, gave added weight to their argument. Their first request for such help from the County Board was refused in 1854 on the grounds that it was "illegal to use tax raised funds to support voluntary benevolent associations."³ Before this organization renewed its attempts to secure public funds, the Home for the Friendless,⁴ the Chicago Ministry at Large,⁵ the Roman Catholic Orphan Asylum,⁶ and the Nursery for Half Orphans⁷ had all been established and were relieving the pressure on the county authorities.

In 1870, another attack was made with the submission of the following resolution:

Whereas, The Orphan Asylum of Chicago on Michigan Avenue, between 23rd and 24th Streets, has taken orphan children from the County Poor House that were at the expense of the County, and has and is maintaining said orphan children and ready to receive more and properly take care and maintain them, therefore,

Resolved, That an appropriation of \$500 be and is hereby made to remunerate the said Orphan Asylum as part compensation for the support of said orphan children.⁸

¹Ibid., sec. 6. ²Davis, op. cit., p. 24.

³Ibid., p. 25.

⁴Incorporated February 12, 1859, for the purpose of "relieving, aiding and providing homes for friendless and indigent women and children" (Private Laws of Illinois, 1859, p. 9).

⁵Like the Chicago Orphan Asylum the Ministry at Large received many children under the charter arrangement making the mayor guardian. It was principally a home finding society (ibid., 1863, p. 35).

⁶Established August 16, 1849, by the Sisters of Mercy.

⁷Incorporated in 1860. ⁸Proceedings, June, 1870, p. 18.

Immediately an amendment was offered to the effect that the Catholic Orphan Asylum should receive the same amount on the grounds that it too had taken children from the county poorhouse.¹ Both resolutions were tabled but were shortly re-submitted and passed as a single resolution giving \$250 to the Chicago Orphan Asylum and a like amount to the Catholic institution "so soon as they shall have taken fourteen children from the Poor House." That the supervisors at least suspected the hazards of the course they were charting can be gathered from the final clause of the resolution that "this shall not be construed as a precedent for future action of future boards."² The legality of the subsidy was not questioned at this time, although when later boards disregarded the admonition and made grants to other private and sectarian child caring institutions, a series of important cases was brought to test this question.³

All of these children's institutions and agencies which were supplementing the work of the county officials were strengthened and permitted to entrench themselves by virtue of the substantial windfalls that came after the great fire of 1871. The Chicago Relief and Aid Society, the oldest and most active of the private family agencies in existence at the time of the fire was made the disbursing agent for all of the millions of dollars that poured in from every part of the world, and when the immediate needs of the fire sufferers were relieved, the large surplus was for a number of years used, among other ways, to make annual grants to many of the private social agencies. Some of the amounts granted were more than ample for operating expenses so that there was a balance available in some cases for expansion of plant.

Thus between 1849 and 1871 there developed a pattern of care for dependent children which persisted for years. The citizens who refused to permit the overcrowding of children in the common mixed almshouse, through their generosity in providing other, private asylums for part of them, probably did future generations of dependent children a disservice. They cannot be criticized for taking up the slack in the public provision for they were merely following in the footsteps of similar private groups

¹Ibid., p. 19. ²Ibid., p. 22. ³See below, p. 168-71.

in the older Eastern states. The possibility of developing a public program which would meet the needs of all dependent children was not considered. The setting was an ideal one for the growth of vested interests and the development of a subsidy system, and later years were to illustrate the enormous difficulties in the way of abandoning this course once launched upon it.

CHAPTER IV

"OUTDOOR" RELIEF

The term "outdoor" relief is a convenient one for designating those forms of assistance provided outside of an institution and was commonly used during this period by the commissioners and supervisors to cover all relief given to persons not resident in either the county almshouse or later the Cook County Hospital. Most important among the items in any such program are the food, fuel, clothing and medical services provided the poor in their own homes.¹ Also to be included here is the assistance given to non-residents in the form of transportation, the expenditures for which were surprisingly large in the early Cook County accounts.

Attempts to Abolish "Outdoor" Relief

In that early classic among social inquiries, Josiah Quincy's report to the Massachusetts General Court in 1821 on The Pauper Laws of the Commonwealth,² the author said that "of all modes of providing for the poor, the most wasteful, the most expensive, and most injurious to their morals and destructive to their industrious habits is that of supply in their own families." And at just about the time Cook County was making its first arrangements for public relief, the famous English Royal Commission on the Poor Laws of 1834 had recommended that this type of relief be totally abolished on exactly these same grounds. "Outdoor" relief has always been subject to attack when the costs of maintaining the poor become burdensome or when "pauperism" is thought to be on the increase, and it was just such an occasion that brings the first mention of outdoor relief in Chicago.

¹In this present discussion, medical services have been treated separately. See below, "Care of the Sick Poor."

²Conveniently found in S. P. Breckinridge, Public Welfare Administration (Chicago, 1934), pp. 30-39.

In an editorial in 1848 protesting the fact that the "county revenue has nearly all been swallowed up" in the relief of the poor, the proprietor wrote:

. . . . This state of things has alarmed the community, and the commissioners, in order the better to understand the circumstances of those to whom they afford support, and for the purpose of taking care of the poor at the least possible expense, have resolved upon discontinuing all out-door relief, and taking under their special care all whose necessities require it. It is believed that this out-door system has led to great imposition, as it most surely has to an enormous expenditure. . . . We have no doubt that, under this arrangement, which we are glad to learn has been entered into, the poor will be well cared for, and large amounts saved to the taxpayers of the county.¹

At the end of the first year of this experiment the Superintendent of the Poor reported that poor expenses had been reduced from \$13,609.24 in 1847 to \$3,068.57 for the year 1848, which according to this official represented a new saving of over \$10,000.00. Of this the county commissioners said:

Lest it might be inferred by any that economy has been purchased at the expense of comfort and the requirements of humanity in the treatment of the poor during the year as set forth above, the undersigned state, that the orders given to the Superintendent in December, 1848, were to close up the Hospital [a cholera hospital] situated on the north side of the river, and remove all persons therein to the County Alms-house, which he was ordered to increase by building an addition thereto. This having been done, the sick, destitute and infirm are all provided for at one place, and the health of the establishment is under the care of the physician employed by the county, Dr. Huber. No out-door relief, except medical, is in any case permitted to be given by the Superintendent, and no purchases of supplies for the house permitted except through the person employed under the orders of the Commissioners; but all persons requiring relief (except such as are so severely sick they cannot be moved) must receive it in the Alms-house under the care of the Commissioners or agent. This method rigidly enforced, has been thought by some as less calculated to secure economy, as a small outlay of even one dollar or fifty cents per week might help to maintain some families who for want of it, would necessarily be compelled to resort to the Alms-house and such pecuniary assistance, continuing but for a limited period would be less expensive.

But experience has shown this to be a dangerous precedent. Such applications would be almost innumerable, and the reason is found in the fact that the recipient of public bounty² would prefer to receive it in the most private manner.

¹Daily Democrat, January 5, 1848.

²Gem of the Prairie, December 16, 1848.

At this distance it is impossible to appraise in any detail this "saving" in poor relief; however there is evidence which points to the conclusion that the net result was what it always is; namely, that a few imposters were actually disposed of, but large numbers of poor persons were reduced to such wretchedness that, one by one, exceptions had to be made and some form of private assistance given. Before this harsh policy was a month old, there were complaints that there was much suffering among the poor and occasionally an account would slip into the newspapers of some particularly pathetic case.¹ In the face of this reported misery, there was no demand on the part of the press for any relaxation in policy, but rather an attempt to care for the most miserable by private funds. When the awful sufferings of an Irish family who were found nearly frozen to death and without food in their house was reported in one of the newspapers, the editor recommended that another concert or fair be held to raise money for such cases.² And so through the winter of 1848-49 there were public "tea parties," church sociables, fairs, concerts and "donation parties" which permitted the commissioners to persist in their determination to give no outdoor relief.³

In December, 1850, the Chicago Relief Society was formed "to systemize [*sic*] charity, extend aid to the needy, and prevent the necessity of common begging" which had naturally been on the increase due to the persistence of the public relief officials in refusing to give any relief in the homes. It was feared that the "bold and vicious vagrant" was getting more than the "timid victim of misfortune" so plans were made to district the city and appoint a visitor for each district.⁴ This society was the parent organization of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society which was incorporated some five years later. Before this organization had been in operation three months, there came the realization that much of its work was merely relieving the board of supervisors of

¹Daily Democrat, December 29, 1847; Gem of the Prairie, December 23, 27, 1848.

²Gem of the Prairie, December 23, 1848.

³Daily Democrat, December 29, 1847; Gem of the Prairie, December 23, 1848, March 3, 1849.

⁴Daily Democrat, December 27, 1850.

responsibilities which were properly public duties. They reported that they had extended relief to "more than 150 families, 89 of whom were widows with from two to six children, and more than fifty of the whole number were rendered needy by sickness." They asked to be reimbursed for the amounts spent on wood and hospital bills on the grounds that these had been forced upon them "instead of having been borne by the proper officers."¹ The Board was not willing to yield immediately and voted not to pay the bills; however from that time on, starting with wood, some outdoor relief was given by the county agent and by the following year the usual program of relief was resumed.²

When the financial panic of 1857 overtook the city and brought a large amount of unemployment, the whole cycle was gone through again. In addition this time to the supplementary assistance provided by voluntary organizations, the municipal government was called upon for funds. In January, 1857, a committee consisting of three aldermen and the mayor was voted \$500 by the city council for use in the emergency with the statement that "while the city government is thus engaged in affording relief, we trust that the fortunate and wealthy of our citizens will contribute their individual aid in the same humane cause."³ When an additional \$1,500 was appropriated two weeks later, a proposal was made to turn this money over to the Chicago Relief and Aid Society for distribution. One alderman objected to this arrangement on the grounds that this agency was a "first class nuisance, sectarian, illiberal and anti-Irish" and so by a vote of 8 to 7 it was decided that this larger sum should also be distributed by the committee of the council. It was said that the real reason for the aldermen's reluctance to have this money distributed by the Society was that this would "very materially restrict the electioneering finances of certain members of the council."⁴

¹Gem of the Prairie, March 15, 1851.

²Ibid., March 29, April 12, 1851.

³Chicago Daily Journal, January 6, 1857. Cited in Leah Feder, Unemployment Relief in Periods of Depression (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1936), p. 22.

⁴Chicago Democratic Press, January 20, 1857.

Another way in which the city government helped was through the provision of fuel, either at cost or free where the person was unable to pay. Various railroads to which the city had granted privileges agreed to haul wood free of charge for this purpose, and by the middle of February the city had spent \$708 in giving free wood.¹

The following winter while there was still a great deal of unemployment the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution by a vote of 32 to 4 instructing the county agent to grant no more home relief and directing the Committee on Poor House and Paupers to "construct all the additional room at the Poor House that is necessary for the maintenance of the poor."² A week later the city was again called upon, but this time the mayor, John G. Haines, refused saying that, "However much we may desire such appropriations, there are no provisions in the [City] Charter authorizing any such application of the people's money. . . ." and concluded by pointing out the advantages of private philanthropy.³ No reference was made in this lengthy statement either to the county's neglect of its responsibilities or to the grant made by council in the previous year. However, despite this refusal, the city did contribute to the public soup houses that were opened during the following winter and spring. At the one on Madison Street sponsored by the Chicago Ministry at Large, between two and three hundred families were served daily during the winter of 1858.⁴

The pressure upon the Board of Supervisors for some relaxation in this policy of refusing to give any home relief had become so great before the end of the year that it was necessary for the Board to make exceptions. In December, 1858, it was decided to permit "outdoor relief" to those individuals whose cases had been favorably reviewed by the Committee on Poor House and

¹Chicago Daily Journal, January 6, 16, and February 17, 1857. Cited in Feder, op. cit., p. 23.

²Chicago Daily Journal, March 10, 1858.

³Chicago Daily Democrat, March 18, 1858.

⁴Chicago Press and Tribune, December 18, 1858; January 3, 1859.

Paupers,¹ and by the end of the following year, the experiment of exclusive almshouse care had again to be abandoned completely.²

There can be little doubt but that these episodes were prompted mainly by ignorance rather than by any deliberate intention to inflict cruel hardship; although poverty attributable to personal defects could always expect harsh treatment. Failure to understand the causes of destitution resulted in the belief that it could be deterred or discouraged, and by the time one group of officials had learned that it could not be, another group had been elected who proceeded to indulge their prerogative of discovering this fact for themselves the first time the costs of poor relief mounted. Then as now the few imposters who are always ready to rely upon any available public or private largess rather than their own exertions, arouse the suspicious attitude by which the rest are judged. Even in view of the widespread unemployment which prevailed in 1858, it was difficult for the public to regard this as unassociated with personal causes.

There is little information as to the identity of these recipients of outdoor relief until nearly the end of the period when the county agent reported in 1870:³

Of the 2,812 families relieved for this quarter [December 1, 1869-March 1, 1870] the nationalities were as follows:

Irish.....	1,368	English and Canadians..	75
German and Swiss.....	593	Poles.....	65
Scandinavians.....	270	French.....	45
Bohemians.....	163	Scotch.....	32
Americans.....	92	Hollanders.....	21
Colored.....	81	Italians.....	7

The causes of distress are given as follows:

Widows.....	889	Old age.....	50
Deserted by husbands.	647	Husbands insane.....	13
On account of sick-		Husbands in prison.....	6
ness.....	599	Loss by fire.....	1
No employment.....	607		

There were always large numbers of widows on the county agent's books and it is probable that the desertions were asso-

¹Ibid., December 11, 1858. ²Ibid., December 8, 1859.

³Proceedings, March, 1870, p. 72.

ciated with the disorganized times following the war,¹ or perhaps the county was more willing to help widows and the men deserted for this reason. Just as with the almshouse population, the numbers of those receiving relief in their own homes rose with the advent of cold weather. For the spring and summer quarters of the same year the numbers were only 333 and 549 families respectively; the sharp rise being attributed by the county agent to the "severity of the weather" during the early winter months.²

The year 1862 marked the beginning of a new era for the poor of Chicago, for it was during that year that it was finally decided by a vote of 25 to 13 and after a long series of debates to allow the "paupers" tea, coffee and sugar which had previously been objected to as unnecessary luxuries.³ The only clue to the nature and quantities of supplies issued through the county agent's office is given in a statement covering the second quarter of 1871 when the following were given:

885 tons of coal	3,432 pounds of rice
614 cords of wood	849 pounds of tea
143,226 pounds of bread	230 pounds of sugar
110,810 pounds of meat	6,960 pounds of soap
5,277 bushels of potatoes	725 pair of shoes
105 barrels of flour	40 pounds of candles
6 1/2 barrels of corn meal	12 gross of matches
3,036 pounds of coffee	108 burial orders

This was distributed to 2,330 families in March, 1,560 in April, and 910 in May.⁴ The idea of a budget based on the numbers and ages in a family group was unknown, and when it is remembered that these were families estimated by the county agent to average five members apiece, not even the burial orders would appear to have been distributed with a lavish hand.

¹Ibid., December, 1869, Appendix. In speaking of desertions here, the county agent says that, "The evil is so on the increase that it would seem absolutely necessary to call for special legislation to check it. . . ."

²Ibid., June, 1869, p. 46; September, 1869, p. 87.

³Goodspeed, op. cit., p. 545.

⁴Proceedings, June, 1871, p. 64.

The County Agent's Office

The development of machinery to administer "outdoor" relief has already been traced in part.¹ As will be recalled, the office of county agent came into being at a time when it was feared that the three county commissioners could not scrutinize sufficiently closely the applications for admission to the poor-house. This occurred during one of the periods when all outdoor relief had been abolished; however upon its resumption, the office was continued and the county agent made responsible for the administration of all such relief under the direction of the Committee on Poor House and Paupers. Originally only a part time job for which the incumbent was paid \$1.50 per day while in the actual discharge of his duties,² it soon developed into a full time position, the salary for which by 1869 was \$1,000 per year.³

With the greatly increased number of applications which poured in during the winter months it became necessary to provide the county agent with some assistance. In December, 1867, a resolution was adopted by the Board of Supervisors authorizing the Committee on Poor House and Paupers to employ a "visitor" at \$3.00 per day for such time as the committee thought necessary.⁴ In practice the county agent did the appointing at first, taking on people just as he needed them. Evidently no special interest was taken in these temporary jobs until the per diem amounts grew large enough to loom as something of a plum, at which time the names of the supervisors themselves began to appear as visitors.⁵ In December, 1868, Supervisor W. G. Ogle of the First Ward offered a resolution forbidding the employment of members of the Board as visitors for the poor on the grounds that this

¹See above, pp. 7-8.

²Gem of the Prairie, March 22, 1851.

³Proceedings, December, 1869, pp. 4-6.

⁴Ibid., December, 1867, pp. 14-15.

⁵Supervisor Patrick Carroll received \$21.00 for seven days work in December, 1868, and collected another \$165.00 the following March. Julius Kuehrt, another member of the Board, drew \$132.00 for forty-four days service at the same time (ibid., December, 1868, p. 46; March, 1869, p. 24).

was "not proper or right."¹ The resolution was tabled and the practice continued.

The following year the possible value of these jobs as patronage for the supervisors was explored: "Resolved, That Supervisors and Assistant Supervisors of the South, West and North Towns of the City of Chicago, have the appointing of one visitor for each of their towns except West Chicago, which shall be entitled to two visitors, these men so appointed, to supersede those men now employed by the present County Agent."² This resolution was concurred in and the supervisors at once got busy with their new quota of appointments. Before the new appointees had been in office any length of time, the Committee on Poor House and Paupers proceeded to discharge all of them and fill the vacancies with men (no women were appointed during this period) of their choice. A protest was immediately filed by the disgruntled members of the Board and a committee appointed to investigate. This committee finally concluded that the authority to appoint visitors lay with the Committee on Poor House and Paupers and that the appointment of them by the supervisors of the various districts could only be justified "by the law of necessity in extreme cases."³

For a few months during the early part of 1870 an assistant county agent was employed; however this officer was soon discharged by the Committee who thought that "the interests of the County were not subserved by longer continuing the office."⁴ The Board of State Charities in their first biennial report strongly condemned the practice of entrusting these investigations to unqualified political appointees,⁵ but the notion that anyone is competent to deal with the problems of poor relief, which was unique neither to Cook County nor to the period, is only now, with considerable difficulty, being dislodged.

¹Ibid., December, 1868, p. 46.

²Ibid., December, 1869, p. 50.

³Ibid., March, 1870, p. 2. ⁴Ibid., June, 1870, p. 26.

⁵First Biennial Report, 1870, p. 168.

Transients

From the very first Chicago had a large floating population and these non-residents were frequently in need of public aid. The construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal attracted numbers of unattached men who often required assistance before they had acquired a settlement. Land speculation brought in another unstable group, but perhaps the largest number of non-residents, particularly after the 'thirties, was represented by the emigrants traveling further west and south. Chicago was the natural clearing house for much of this western migration and had to come to the rescue of hundreds of individuals and families who became stranded here when their scanty funds were exhausted.

The section of the poor law requiring that non-residents be provided for was complied with, apparently without complaint, during the early boom period when laborers for the canal and buyers for the public lands were needed:

It is worthy of remark, that notwithstanding the low state of the county finances during this period [the 1830's], the sick or disabled strangers and travelers, or unfortunate residents, were uniformly provided with proper nourishment, medicine and careful attendance at the public expense. Several instances are on record of appropriations from the treasury for these and like purposes.¹

A few years later during the general depression which followed the collapse in land values in 1837, this generous attitude toward the transient was replaced by the more familiar one of annoyance at being burdened with the support of persons not "their own." One editor, after complaining of the amount of poor relief given to non-residents wrote:

. . . . The paupers who applied for relief were principally from the Canal and many from Will County. . . . Under the laws of this State and especially under the manner in which they are in some cases obeyed, the tax of supporting paupers, &c., is very severe upon such a County as Cook--comprising within its limits a large frontier city, with the Canal on one side, and the vessels from the Lakes upon the other, to pour in among us swarms of destitute persons made needy by misfortunes and crime--pauper refugees from other portions of the union. . . . Our State, especially as far as this county is concerned, should take some measures to protect us from

¹William Bross, History of Chicago (Chicago, 1876), p.

this increasing influx of paupers, or to regulate their introduction. . . .¹

This protest concluded with the intimation that the overseers in Will County were encouraging their "paupers" to come to Cook County and recommended that all non-residents become a state charge. In view of this attitude and existing provisions in the poor law for removals, one would naturally expect to find a great deal of litigation between counties over the settlement of these non-residents. Whether these cases were disposed of by extra-legal negotiations between the commissioners and the overseers of other counties or whether the transients were merely "passed on," no case involving determination of settlement was to be found submitted to a court of record prior to 1862. It is significant that in this first case (which did not involve Cook County) Chief Justice John D. Caton said in his decision:

Not much litigation has arisen in this State in relation to the settlement of paupers, and no case has, until now, come before this court requiring a construction of our statute on the subject. Plain and simple as the statute seems to be, the history of the judicial proceedings in older states on the subject of paupers, admonishes us that we cannot be too cautious in the beginning. The time will come when this will be a most fruitful source of litigation, and it is much better that we proceed slowly and with care and only decide the questions as they actually arise, and that after pondering them well, rather than by a bold dash undertake to grasp and dispose of the whole subject at once, as it were, by inspiration. . . .²

The reports of the county agent and the incredibly large amounts spent for transportation, both by railroad and by lake, would suggest that a policy was adopted of sending transients on their way thus ridding the county of them rather than relying on judicial determination.

In commenting on the amount shown in the following table for the second quarter, the county agent said:

I have been obliged to give more Railroad passes than at any previous period, on account of the large immigration of Swedes, Norwegians and Bohemians, who came here destitute of all means to proceed further, and some of them half starved. What should I do in such cases? I had to give them transpor-

¹Chicago Daily American, September 28, 1839.

²Waldo Payne v. The Town of Durham, 29 Ill. 125 (1862).

tation and something to eat, for it was cheaper to send them off than to keep them over winter, and as work was slack all summer, it was impossible for them to get work, and we would have to support them all winter; therefore, I have given them transportation in order to relieve us in the winter.¹

TABLE 4

EXPENDITURES FOR TRANSPORTATION BY THE COOK COUNTY
AGENT FOR THE YEAR 1869*

Period	Total Amount Spent for Outdoor Relief	Amount Spent for Transportation	Per Cent Spent for Transportation
Four quarters	\$96,404.34	\$14,599.00	15.1
1st quarter.....	18,132.67	2,518.73	13.8
2d quarter.....	10,113.60	4,301.32	42.5
3d quarter.....	15,423.74	3,738.65	24.2
4th quarter.....	52,734.33	4,040.30	7.6

*Data taken from county agent's quarterly reports.

That recourse to the courts was seldom had is further suggested in a later report in which it is said that: "There is also a large number of Paupers sent here from abroad, the majority of them, if known as such, and unable to get back themselves, I have returned to the locality from whence they came or refused to do anything for them; but in some cases where humanity requires, I have helped them by sending them to the County House to prevent them from perishing, but only in a few instances where I thought that they might be saved to the community."²

After the establishment of the Cook County Hospital in 1866 a rule was made that no transients were to be admitted there. In 1870, the secretary of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society, Mr. O. C. Gibbs, petitioned the Board of Supervisors for a modification in this regulation which had imposed such a burden on this private organization. In denying the petition, the Committee on

¹Proceedings, September, 1869, pp. 87-88.

²Ibid., December, 1869, p. 67.

Poor House and Paupers insisted that while they were "inclined to the principles of humanity which demands that the poor and the unfortunate should receive aid" yet they were of the opinion that "the adoption of such a rule as is petitioned for, will establish a precedent for the support of all the poor who may be sent to this county from other counties in the State, and also from other States, and as such, that it would be unwise for the Board to adopt such a rule."¹

In this nineteenth century viewpoint, the student of social welfare will recognize an attitude which has persisted ever since tax raised funds have been used for the relief of destitution. The concern of the rate payer in seventeenth century England lest the parish stock be wasted on strangers; "warning out" as practiced in the eighteenth century New England towns and the generally unsatisfactory condition of the transient at the present time all point to the fact that care of the stranger may not safely be left with local government.

Relief to Soldiers' Families during the Civil War

The City of Chicago and Cook County both shared in the administration of the public relief provided to the families of soldiers who were fighting in the Civil War. Numerous emergency committees sprang up during the war period to organize citizen participation in winning the conflict. The best known of these was the semi-official United States Sanitary Commission, an active branch of which was established in Cook County; however since the work of this commission was devoted almost exclusively to the relief of suffering on the battlefields, its activities are omitted from the present discussion.²

First among the committees organized for the care of soldiers' families was the War Finance Committee sponsored by the

¹Ibid., March, 1870, pp. 25, 40.

²Detailed discussion of the work of the Chicago branch of the Sanitary Commission are to be found in Mary A. Livermore, My Story of the War . . . (Hartford, Conn., 1892); United States Sanitary Commission, The United States Sanitary Commission (Boston, 1864); Andreas, op. cit., Vol. II.

city government, which by May, 1861, had raised nearly \$3,000 by voluntary subscription. The activities of this group were merged a few months later with the Union Defense Committee which was to be the principal relief organization for the duration of the war.¹ By December, 1861, the Union Defense Committee had obtained \$1,500 in grants from the Board of Supervisors and estimated that they would have to care for between three and four hundred families during the coming winter. At this time the County Board organized its War Fund Committee, consisting of five members chosen from among the supervisors, to work in conjunction with the other committee. Both of these groups raised funds for bounties in addition to their relief activities, but from 1862 till the conclusion of the war, it was the War Fund Committee of the County Board which assumed financial responsibility for the major part of the relief work.² Headquarters of this committee were established at the courthouse where the soldiers' wives called for their weekly allowances.³

The Committee very soon found itself confronted with a case load which was mounting daily and was forced to employ extra help. A clerk and a visitor were hired and it was determined that each case should be investigated before regular relief was instituted. A budget of \$1.50 per week for the head of the family and twenty-five cents additional for each child was decided upon, although the budget was said to have been subject to revision on the basis of individual needs as shown by the investigation. By March there were 441 families on the regular roll which was only a few more than had been anticipated, but the winter had been so severe that their funds were exhausted sooner than they expected and it was necessary to borrow money to keep from falling down on the weekly payments.⁴

On the 4th of July, 1862, the chairman of the committee, A. G. Throop, inserted a notice in the newspapers that there would be no payment the following Saturday for "want of Funds."⁵ A few

¹Bessie L. Pierce, MS of Vol. II of History of Chicago.

²Goodspeed, op. cit., p. 450.

³Chicago Tribune, May 8, 1862.

⁴Ibid., March 5, 1862. ⁵Ibid., July 4, 1862.

days later a tax of \$200,000 was imposed on the county for bounties and relief, and in December it was again necessary to borrow money from the banks.¹ This time \$20,000 was borrowed to be used exclusively for the relief of soldiers' families. For the year 1861-62, a total of \$72,638.09 was spent in this way.²

In February, 1863, there were 637 families within the city receiving weekly allowances of \$2.00 and within a year this number had increased to 945.³

During the winter of 1863 a group of women met in the ladies' parlor of the Tremont House and organized the "Fuel Saving Society," the purpose of which was to provide wood for the soldiers' families. A "Grand Festival and Ball" was given at this hotel on February 17th, the proceeds of which were devoted to this cause. The Michigan Central Railroad hauled one hundred cords of wood free for the Society which also solicited contributions from the public. The coal and wood which was gathered together was turned over to the War Fund Committee for distribution during March.⁴

Late in the same year another group of women, many of whom were active in the Chicago Branch of the Sanitary Commission, formed a society to supplement the work of the public agency which was unable to give adequate relief. This organization, known as the Ladies' Relief Society for Soldiers' Families, divided the city into districts and appointed six visitors for each district to constitute a visiting committee to determine which families were in special need. Contributions of food and clothing were asked for through the press and from the pulpits of the churches and a "Depository" was opened at 73 State Street where contributions were received.⁵

By the summer of 1864 the War Fund Committee's money was

¹Ibid., July 22, 1862.

²Goodspeed, op cit., pp. 467, 480.

³Bessie L. Pierce, MS for Vol. II of History of Chicago.

⁴Chicago Tribune, February 6, 14, and March 6, 1863.

⁵Ibid., December 21, 29, 1863; January 9, 1864; The Sanitary Commission of the United States Army (New York, 1864), p. 278.

again nearly exhausted and scores of families were reported to have gone without sufficient food. The housing of the soldiers' families had also become a difficult problem due to the reluctance of landlords to rent to soldiers' wives. Some of these women attempted to obtain employment, but the wages were pitifully small and the hours long.¹ The editor of the Chicago Tribune wrote that "Starvation, prostitution, suicide threaten us largely, unless the matter be taken in hand" and called in vigorous terms upon the "many wealthy people in Chicago who owe their wealth to the Civil War" to help the destitute soldiers' families.² Between July 1 and September 1 of that year \$20,492.15 was spent by the public organization and when funds again ran low in October and November, many of the business houses donated one day's profits to the cause.³ In December the Board of Supervisors authorized the Committee to borrow an additional \$20,000 which was sufficient to carry on the work until the end of the war.

After the war was over a "Soldiers' Fair" was held at the Wabash Avenue Rink and \$24,602.75 raised for the benefit of the soldiers' families.⁴

It has been estimated that the total cost of the Civil War to Cook County was \$4,033,660 of which \$90,809 was spent by the county for the relief of soldiers' families. The other amounts spent were substantially as follows: County bounty, \$2,571,272; city bounty, \$119,472; substitutes, \$56,350; special by wards and towns, \$734,453; county families of soldiers outside of city limits, \$166,304; Board of Trade direct to families of soldiers, \$220,000; mercantile associations to soldiers' families, \$75,000.⁵

¹Chicago Tribune, August 9, 24, 1864. One Chicago laundry offered work to soldiers' wives at the rate of \$2.00 per week with board and required them to work from 7 A.M. to 6 P.M.

²Ibid., July 22, 1864.

³Goodspeed, op. cit., pp. 487-91.

⁴Chicago Tribune, November 14, 1867; January 4, 1868.

⁵Goodspeed, op. cit., p. 480.

CHAPTER V

CARE OF THE SICK POOR

Few provisions of the poor laws have been so productive of litigation as those concerned with the care of the sick poor. The issue to be decided in these cases is very often the settlement of the sick person, although questions dealing with the legal right to free medical service and attempts to secure this right have contributed to the inconsistencies which characterize the body of judicial decisions on the subject.¹ Practice in the allocation of the field of sickness among the various units of government has not been uniform nor has there always been agreement as to the distinction between health and poor law function and both of these have resulted in further confusion. The following account of the early efforts of Cook County and the City of Chicago to care for indigent persons who became ill provides a nice example of this uncertainty as to the proper division of responsibility.

Care by the City

The establishment of hospitals and quarantine stations and the designation of a city physician were forced upon Chicago at an early date by a series of epidemics of "Asiatic" cholera. The first appearance of the disease was in 1832, when it was brought in by troops from the east who had come to Fort Dearborn to assist in quelling an Indian uprising.² For the next thirty years there were to be successive outbreaks of varying severity with each reappearance of the dread disease inspiring new sanitary and health measures on the part of the city. This present discussion is not concerned with the preventive work done by the

¹The present confusion in practice and thinking with reference to the legal right to free medical service as well as other forms of relief is well set forth in Edith Abbott's "Is There a Legal Right to Relief?" in the Social Service Review, XII, No. 2 (June, 1938), 260-75.

²Pierce, op. cit., I, 37.

board of health which was shortly organized, but rather with the care given the sufferers from the disease. The fact that these victims were so often immigrants who were poor as well as sick and that the facilities provided by the board of health were frequently used for the care of other sick persons, properly the charge of the poor law authorities, is sufficient reason for reviewing the activities of this organization, although the work of a board of health would ordinarily not be classified as public assistance.

A vigilance committee of three citizens appointed by the town trustees in 1834 was the precursor of the later board of health. Organized to take precautions against a threatened outbreak of cholera, this body was soon disbanded when the disease failed to make its appearance. Another short-lived organization was the Board of Health appointed under a special act in 1835.¹ After disagreeing on the necessity for floating a proposed loan of two thousand dollars to be used for cholera prevention, the seven members of the Board adjourned sine die.² What was to be the first health authority of any permanence was organized under the provisions of the city charter of 1837 which empowered the city council to designate three commissioners as a Board of Health and appoint a health officer.³ Along with the usual powers with respect to sanitation and quarantine, the charter granted authority to the council to erect and operate a city hospital.⁴

The first hospital built under this authority was a so-called "pesthouse" located on the lake front just above North Avenue on ground that had originally been purchased for a city cemetery. This building, constructed at a cost of \$204.20 burned in 1845, but was immediately replaced due to the prevalence of scarlet fever and smallpox.⁵ The new pesthouse which with its fur-

¹Laws of Illinois, 1835, p. 204. This was an act granting Chicago additional powers not included in the general law for the incorporation of towns.

²Andreas, op. cit., I, 594; Report of Board of Health, 1867-69 and Sanitary History of Chicago, 1833-70 (Chicago, 1871), p. 10.

³Act of March 4, 1837, sec. 57. ⁴Ibid., sec. 60.

⁵City of Chicago, Annual Financial Report 1843; Report of the Board of Health of the City of Chicago, 1911-18, p. 1472; Andreas, op. cit., I, 594-96.

nishings represented an investment of \$474.86 was put into operation under the auspices of a special committee of the city council as the Board of Health was said to have been practically defunct at this time.¹

The cholera which appeared in 1849 was of epidemic proportions and continued to break out each summer for a number of years. Additional facilities were needed to cope with this new attack, and therefore, in May, 1849, a hospital accepting nothing but cholera cases was opened by the city. This building was located south of Madison Street between the Chicago River and Clark Street. With the disappearance of the disease in the fall, the institution was closed but had to be reopened the following spring due to another outbreak.² In the summer of 1852, the Board of Health which had been revived in 1848 to help fight this plague then threatening to decimate the population, found it necessary to open another temporary cholera hospital at the foot of Grand Avenue.³ The following spring it was planned to close the pest-house on the south side and move it further out of town; however in June, 1854, it was necessary to reopen it as a quarantine station for immigrants.

Nothing is known of the accommodations provided in the earlier hospitals, and very little about the quarantine station aside from the fact that it was divided into two wards, one having fifteen beds for men and another with six beds for women patients. In addition to the hospital itself, there was constructed a large shed to house the immigrants who were forced to wait for the recovery of relatives or friends who were patients in the hospital.⁴ It should be recalled here that immigrants continued to come and at an accelerated rate after the completion of the railroads in the late 'forties and early 'fifties. All passenger

¹Chicago Daily Democrat, February 2, 1846; Faith Fitzgerald, "Growth of Municipal Activities in Chicago, 1833 to 1875" (Unpublished Master's thesis, Department of Political Science, University of Chicago, 1933), p. 132.

²Daily Democrat, May 17, 1849; August 15, 1849; June 26, 1850.

³Ibid., July 15, 1852.

⁴B. L. Pierce, MS of Vol. II of History of Chicago.

trains and boats carrying immigrants were inspected by the city health officer before being permitted to discharge their passengers, and in the month and a half after the opening of the station, 139 persons were held for observation and treatment.¹ Many of the immigrants of this period were from the Scandinavian countries, who along with the Irish who were fleeing from starvation in their homeland, were particularly susceptible to the disease and died in large numbers. The picture of these immigrants waiting in a shed amongst strangers for the recovery or death of a member of the family is one of the most moving scenes in the early history of Chicago.

In May of the same year (1854) another temporary hospital was opened due to overcrowding in the old city hospital built in 1845 and the pesthouse which had been opened the previous summer.² Evidently this accumulation of a number of temporary institutions brought the realization that the need was not being met for the City Physician was asked to "give his opinion regarding the establishment of a hospital commensurate with the actual wants and population of the city."³ His recommendation for a city hospital where all cases of contagious disease could be cared for was followed by the announcement by the city council of a prize of one hundred dollars to be awarded for the best plan submitted for such a hospital to be built on ground purchased for that purpose at Eighteenth and Arnold Streets. The prize was awarded to architects Carter and Bauer who subsequently submitted an estimate of \$30,000 for its construction. A tax was imposed for this purpose, the corner stone laid in June, 1856, and the building completed in November, 1857.⁴

An impasse developed when the time came to plan the inter-

¹Daily Democratic Press, August 5, 1854.

²City of Chicago, Report of Board of Health, 1867-69, p.

32.

³Ibid., p. 33.

⁴Enid R. Rich, "The Cook County Hospital" (Unpublished Master's thesis, School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago, 1927), pp. 24-25. The reported cost of the hospital ranges from \$45,000 (Andreas, op. cit., I, 596) to \$80,000 (Moses and Kirkland, History of Chicago, II, 256) with other historians setting amounts between these two extremes.

nal organization of the new institution as a result of the serious controversy then being waged within the medical profession over homeopathy. The board which had been entrusted with the task of putting the hospital in operation received a citizens' petition requesting that the homeopathic physicians of the city be allowed to have part of the hospital. This communication was referred to the Hospital Committee of the council who decided that there should be two medical boards, one homeopathic and one allopathic and two resident physicians representative of the two medical faiths. Patients could choose which treatment they preferred and in the absence of any choice, the patient was to be shunted backwards and forwards between the two departments, spending a week in each. This ridiculously impractical plan was actually adopted and the boards appointed; however before these boards could be organized, the members of the two schools became so embroiled in arguments conducted in the public press and medical journals, that after a few meetings they gave up any hope of arriving at a working agreement and disbanded. In the face of this deadlock which the Board of Health was unable to arbitrate, the council achieved a solution by reporting that in any event the city was too poor to furnish the building. The fact that both the smallpox and cholera epidemics had subsided in the meantime relieved the pressure for further action at this time. The subsequent history of this hospital which was never operated under city auspices will be picked up in the discussion of medical care provided by the county.¹

The City Physician

More immediately identified as "public assistance" were the services provided by the city to the poor by the city physician. As early as 1835, before incorporation as a city, Chicago had a town physician--an office which existed at that time without any statutory authority.² This official was paid on the basis of actual services rendered rather than by an annual salary³

¹Rich, op. cit., pp. 25-27; Report of the Board of Health, 1911-18, pp. 1482, 1486. Also see below, pp. 66-70.

²Weekly Democrat, October 28, 1835.

³In 1852, the city physician's charges were "For each

and his appointment was sometimes neglected when there was no threat of epidemics.¹ The first intimation of the confusion between the city health and the county poor law authorities with respect to their separate responsibilities towards the sick is to be found in an order of the city council issued on September 1, 1842, to the effect that in the future no services were to be charged to the city account by the city physician "except in connection with and on the requisition of the board of health, and that all claims for such services be audited by the President of said board before they are presented to the council. . . ."² The explanation for this statement is to be found in the fact that the city physician, Dr. William B. Egan, had in the then current hard times refused to deny his services to poor people suffering from other than contagious diseases, and as a consequence the city council was being presented with bills for services which should have been rendered by the county. Upon the issuance of the order curtailing his activities in this direction, Dr. Egan resigned only to be re-elected to the office at once.³ Whether or not he was allowed to continue to use his own discretion in assuming the responsibilities of the county is not known, but an order was later issued by the council permitting free medical attention to any person unable to pay for the service if requested by two aldermen.⁴

When the city ordinances were revised in 1851, room was left for the continuance of this practice in the assignment of

visit to a family where there were three or more persons in one house, 50 cents to \$1.00; for each visit to the Cholera Hospital or Pest House, and prescribing for the sick therein, \$1.00; for the same at the Bridewell or Watchhouse, \$1.00; for visiting and prescribing for one or two persons in one house, 50 to 75 cents; for visiting railroad cars, steam or canal boats, or sailing vessels, to ascertain if any pestilential disease was on board, \$1.00. All visits between 10 P.M. and 5 A.M. to be double the foregoing" (Report of Board of Health, 1867-69, pp. 28-29).

¹No appointment was made between 1843 and 1848. Fitzgerald, op. cit., p. 135.

²Chicago Daily American, September 3, 1842.

³Pierce, op. cit., I, 265.

⁴Daily American, August 3; September 7, 1842.

the city physician's duties. After setting forth those with reference to the reporting and treatment of contagious diseases in the city institutions, he is charged with visiting and administering to "other sick in hospitals (if not able to employ other medical aid) . . . and other indigents as directed by the Board of Health."¹

Between 1860 and 1866, the functions of the Board of Health were carried on in a desultory manner by the police department and for much of this time there was no city physician. Fortunately the city was free of epidemics during the Civil War period and it was not until the fall of 1866 that another outbreak of cholera brought about the revival of the Board. In the intervening years when there had been no city physician, the county physician had taken care of the sick poor and when a city physician was again appointed, he was ordered to confine his attention to the cholera hospital and refer all other cases to the county. The county physician for the North Division of Chicago, Dr. J. R. Gore, thought that this insistence upon the distinction between health and poor law was being pressed too far:

The common and natural place to apply for aid, medical or otherwise, would seem to be the office of the Board of Health; as the large appropriation of money and the opening of a Hospital indicated. Yet it was the practice of this institution to refer applicants not provided with a Physician's certificate of Cholera to the County Agent.

As a result of this divided responsibility, patients exhausted by the disease were daily attempting to make the journey from the Health office to the office of the County Agent, thence to the office of a County Physician, thence with the required certificate, again to the Board of Health, to be transported three miles to the Cholera Hospital. It is not surprising that one man died in an express wagon before he completed this circle, but it may be presumed that unnecessary fatigue and delay of treatment placed others beyond the reach of remedies.²

From this time on there is no evidence of the city's providing medical relief, although one writer has uncovered a case which would indicate that even in comparatively recent years the responsibilities of the two authorities was not clearly understood. In 1914, after the death of a poor man, John Lyons, a

¹Revised Ordinances of Chicago (Chicago, 1856), p. 144.

²Proceedings, 1866, p. 42.

joint committee of the County Board and the City Council appointed to investigate the facts surrounding his death concluded its report with the statement that: ". . . while Cook County Hospital is managed by the Board of County Commissioners and is for the medical care of the sick poor of Cook County, which includes the City of Chicago, there is also a city government, with various Boards, Commissioners, Doctors, Ambulance Corps, Legal Department, Health and Police Departments; that the relations between the city and county government are not clearly defined anywhere, and there are resulting frictions and conflicts of authority, with a consequent difficulty in fixing responsibility."¹

An ordinance passed in 1851 made it the duty of the city health officer to see that persons ". . . dying in hospitals of the city, or in other municipal institutions were decently and promptly buried at the expense of the city, provided such . . . have not the means to defray their own expenses of sickness and interment."² An item of \$115 for "Burying Paupers" appears in the annual financial statement for that year, although subsequent reports make no mention of expenditures for this purpose. In the absence of any explanation for this temporary assumption of poor law function, it may be considered as one more example of the general confusion in the allocation of the field.

County Medical Relief

The claim of the non-resident to free medical care and burial had been specially recognized in the poor law passed in 1821;³ however the right of the settled poor to these services remained an implied one inhering in the definition of "pauper" until 1874. At this time persons not coming under the definition of pauper and yet unable to pay for medical attention were to be cared for by the county authorities.⁴ Like other items of relief,

¹Proceedings, 1913-14, p. 1962. Cited in Rich, op. cit., p. 16. See below, p. 155, n. 4.

²Revised Ordinances of Chicago (1851), p. 144.

³Laws of the State of Illinois, 1821, sec. 1, p. 100.

⁴Illinois Revised Statutes, 1874, c. 107, par. 24.

the nature and extent of the medical service to be provided was not specified and so it was left to the county commissioners to interpret this obligation as they saw fit.

Little is known of the treatment accorded the sick in the two earliest Cook County almshouses. It is certain that the slab sided building on the town square was poorly adapted for use as a hospital,¹ although at least one bit of evidence suggests that the county commissioners attempted to make up for its physical inadequacies by furnishing the best that Chicago had in the way of surgical skill.

In 1838, a young laborer employed on the canal at Lockport was injured while at work and came to Chicago where it was discovered that he had a fractured thigh. He shortly became worse and was sent to the poorhouse, where examination by the physician called in by the commissioners revealed other injuries. Three other physicians--all that Chicago had at that time--were summoned by the commissioners to consider the case, and after consultation performed a delicate operation. It is unfortunately necessary to report that the patient died some weeks later of hemorrhage, but this need not lessen our admiration of this example of solicitude on the part of the commissioners.²

Until 1866, there was no county hospital. The sick poor were cared for either in the almshouse, or if acutely ill, in various private hospitals and dispensaries where the commissioners paid for their nursing and maintenance. In 1847, a dispensary opened in connection with Rush Medical College was adopted by the commissioners as a county institution, and in the same year a general hospital with one hundred beds, opened through the influence of some of the professors at Rush, chiefly Dr. Daniel Brainard,³ was given a quasi-public status through the fact that the county

¹See above, pp. 18-19.

²History of Medicine and Surgery and Physicians and Surgeons of Chicago (published under the supervision of the Council of the Chicago Medical Society, Chicago, 1922), pp. 37-38.

³Dr. Daniel Brainard (1812-1866) enjoyed the distinction of founding the first medical college in Chicago (Rush), of organizing the first general hospital, of being the city's first health officer and of being for some years the editor of the city's first newspaper, the Chicago Democrat.

provided the supplies.¹ It was established in a one story warehouse known as Tippecanoe Hall located at the corner of Kinzie and Walcott Streets.² This building was apparently ill suited for use as a hospital. There were no regular wards, the ventilation was said to have been particularly bad and the patients suffered from overcrowding.³ In June, 1853, the Sisters of Mercy took over this building and from this time on, the hospital was known as Mercy Hospital.⁴ County patients were cared for here at the rate of three dollars a week until 1863 when the hospital department was established at the poor farm in Jefferson.⁵

With the removal of the poorhouse to Jefferson in 1854, the Board of Supervisors were faced with the problem of transporting out there large numbers of sick people. It will be recalled

¹As quinine was at that time worth \$10.00 an ounce, the commissioners refused to provide it for the use of patients, and it was therefore found necessary to use strychnia as a substitute, which was said to have answered nearly all purposes in doses of one-eighth grain. James Nevin Hyde, Early Medical Chicago (Chicago, 1879), p. 42.

²Rich, op. cit., p. 16; Hyde, op. cit., p. 42.

³Chicago Weekly Democrat, December 28, 1847.

⁴In 1849, the Illinois Hospital of the Lake had been incorporated and was opened on November 23, 1850, occupying one floor of the old Lake House at the corner of Rush and North Water Streets. Nurses were furnished by the Sisters of Mercy and when sufficient funds for its operation were not forthcoming from the lectures and minstrel shows given for its benefit, the entire institution was turned over to that order in 1851. Mercy Hospital was incorporated on June 2, 1852, and the Illinois General Hospital of the Lake discontinued after the Sisters of Mercy moved to Tippecanoe Hall. The act incorporating the Illinois General Hospital authorized both the city and the county to send their sick poor to that institution; however it was impossible to determine whether the county ever availed itself of this privilege.

⁵In 1859, a protest was made by one of the county supervisors over the size of the bills submitted by Mercy Hospital. In his complaint he said that there was a physician paid to take care of the sick at the poorhouse and he recommended that those patients who could be moved be immediately transferred to the county poorhouse (Chicago Daily Journal, December 9, 1859). From this it may be inferred that Mercy Hospital was used for temporary and acute illnesses and that the almshouse sheltered the chronic sick. This conclusion is supported by the communication from the County Building Committee to the Board of Health which is reproduced below.

that the new institution, which was nine miles from the city, was opened in the winter and it was feared that many of the sick could not stand the journey. The following letter written by the chairman of the Cook County Building Committee to the city council is so revealing of the confused relationships between these two bodies and gives such a vivid picture of the almshouse population that it is given in full:

To the Honble. The Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Chicago in Common Council Assembled.

The completion of the new County Poor House and expected removal to it, within a few days, of the Paupers, from the old building would seem to be an occasion, to which I would respectfully draw the attention of your Honble. body.

The legitimate purpose of a Poor House is for the support and protection of destitute persons, who are unable to keep themselves. In older settled regions able bodied people unable to procure employment are commonly found in such institutions, but here, the occupants are usually old men and women, children and widows, with young children and a medium class consisting of parties who are in feeble health or afflicted with slight bodily ailments, which render them temporarily unable to earn their own support; but, latterly and especially during the past summer, a large portion have been of persons much fitter for the wards of a hospital than the interior of a Poor House, being affected with malignant and supposed contagious diseases. The County Physician and other officers in charge of the Poor House state that Typhoid and Ship Fever, Dysentery and Cholera have been the prevailing diseases, with others of a kindred character during the past four months. Many of those removed from various parts of the city within that period have died of Cholera, Typhus, Ship Fever, etc. in 12, 24, and 36 hours after their being transferred to the Poor House; in fact, they were so low, when moved, that they reached a place of burial, with barely sufficient life in them to warrant the expression, that they were alive, but in a condition that the lapse of a few hours closed their career. A great proportion of these unfortunates have been German and Swedish Emigrants and but few of other nations, ignorant of our languages and customs, and in many instances arriving on the cars labouring under Cholera, Ship Fever, etc. and have sought such miserable shelter and crowded buildings, as they could obtain, and in some such places, have been found from four to six in a small room, all prostrated with disease, without a bed to lay on or a blanket to cover them and equally wanting in other comforts deemed necessary for sick people. The Health regulations, would seem to intimate that such parties should be cared for by the City but the greater part have been attended to by the County officers. The question as to whose duty it is, to see after them or at whose expense they are to be kept is of less consequence than that such diseased subjects should be placed in a Public Hospital in the city, where they could receive close medical attention and where the distance of removal would not aggravate their bad condi-

tion, and prevent the introduction of contagious and malignant diseases, into the Poor House. The New building is some 9 miles from the City and during the winter, it will be cruel and inhuman to attempt to carry up there, persons afflicted with dangerous diseases, besides doing great injustice to the weak or convalescent persons that may be already there, by exposing them to the contamination of those laboring under contagious or malignant diseases. The City paying the greater portion of the Taxes, it is a matter of small moment, whether the bills for Pauper expenses are paid under the name of the City or County. It is therefore suggested that the present Cholera Hospital be fitted up, either by the City or County and be, permanently kept open for the reception of those sick persons, constantly bro't by the Rail Roads, who may be unfit or unable to bear removal to the New Poor House, and that, that building if possible be maintained hereafter free from the inoculation of contagious or malignant diseases and that so soon as those who might be placed in the Proposed Hospital, become convalescent, they shall be transferred to the new Poor House.

In the month of Sept. and Oct. 1853, there were received into the poor house 102 paupers - and there died there during last year 43 persons. In the two past months there were received 282 of whom 80 have died of Cholera, Typhus and Ship Fever, and scarcely 5% of all other diseases. Comment is unnecessary and the fact is evident that the Poor House has more the character of an Hospital, for the most malignant complaints, than for the purposes for which it is really intended. At the present moment, there exists an amount of want, sickness and misery of which no one can have a conception, unless they will go around with the County Agent and thus learn that while our City presents such an appearance of wealth and splendour, and external prosperity, there are human beings, particularly those ignorant of our language, suffering every privation and misery that humanity can be subjected to.

As the Board of Supervisors will not meet for some weeks, I have taken the liberty of sending in this communication to awaken the attention not only of your Honble. body but of all those who tho' now possessing wealth and its attendant comforts, may through the changes and vicissitudes of this life, be yet compelled to receive aid from their fellow men and even rejoice in the opportunity of the asylum afforded by a County Poor House to the poor and afflicted.

I remain,

Yours Respy.

Thos. B. Dwyer,

Chicago,
November 13/54.

Chm. Building Com.
Cook County.¹

¹Original document 1239 of the year 1854, City Clerk's Office, Chicago, Illinois. Included as Appendix "A" in Rich, op. cit.

This petition was referred to the Board of Health who granted the request a few days later; however before the cholera hospital could be put in shape, an epidemic of this disease broke out which forced the Board to use the hospital for its original purpose.

First County Hospital

It is now necessary to pick up the story of the hospital which the city had never opened due to the controversy between the two schools of medical practice. This building which was to be the first Cook County Hospital stood vacant until 1859, when it was leased to a group of five physicians to be used as a public hospital and for clinical teaching of the students at Rush Medical College.¹ This arrangement continued until 1862 when it was commandeered by the military authorities and used as an army hospital until November, 1865.² Even before the hospital was turned back to the city, the same group of doctors who had formerly leased the building made overtures to the Board of Supervisors with the hope that it would be bought or leased as a county hospital. As a means towards achieving this end, they succeeded in having one of their number, Dr. George J. Amerman, elected a county supervisor, and he was in turn able to persuade the rest of the Board to agree to the plan. The county owned the Reform School property consisting of 160 acres between Fortieth and Forty-third Streets on the South Side which it leased to the city. An even exchange was made by which the city obtained the free use of this property and the county that of the hospital; however there was no exchange of titles. One of the conditions upon which the county had consented to assume the administration of the hospital was that operating expenses should not be more than \$10,000 per year, a condition which Dr. Amerman is said to have accepted with "delightful alacrity," although the cost of mainte-

¹Rich, op. cit., p. 27.

²During its occupancy by the army it was known as the Des Marres General Hospital and was used exclusively for the treatment of eye and ear patients. William E. Quine, "Early History of the Cook County Hospital to 1870" in History of Medicine and Surgery in Chicago, pp. 259-60.

tance for the second year was reported to have been \$20,000, and for the third year \$23,000, and by the fourth year close to \$30,000.¹

This institution which is always referred to as the "Old County Hospital" was located on the southwest corner of Eighteenth and Arnold Streets. It was three stories high with a frontage of 133 feet and a depth varying from 55 to 60 feet. Built of red brick and trimmed in limestone, it was described as a "distinctly imposing" structure. One of the first internes at the hospital recalled that:

The hospital had no equipment in those days except an abundant store of medicine and of test tubes and an adequate supply of adhesive plaster and of material for bandages, splints and sutures. There was no microscopic and no clinical laboratory apart from the drug room. . . . Asepsis was unknown. Internes in touch with erysipelas and gangrene, or engaged in post-mortem work, were assumed to have no connection with obstetrical cases, but there was no stern rule against it, and they thought no ill of maintaining friendly relations with laudable pus.

Puerperal infections were frightfully frequent and deadly and the obstetric ward was closed on two or three occasions for several weeks at a time on account of them. During these intervals the windows were kept wide open, night and day; atomizers were kept busy sputtering weak antiseptic vapors into the atmosphere; walls and ceilings were freshly white-washed; and all woodwork was scrubbed with antiseptic solutions, but the old deadly ignorance of personal transmission of infection continued.²

If this sounds shocking now, it should be remembered that it was typical of the general level of medical knowledge at this time, and there can be little doubt but that the establishment of the hospital was a distinct gain for the poor of Cook County.

When the hospital was opened on January 12, 1866, only forty-four rooms were fitted up although it was soon necessary to bring this up to the maximum capacity of 160 beds.³ A dispensary was opened later in the same year, but, since many people did not know of its existence, only thirty-five patients were treated here during 1866.⁴ Three years later, 2,056 patients were treated in

¹Quine, op. cit., pp. 257-60. ²Ibid., p. 263.

³Chicago Tribune, January 8, 15, 1866.

⁴Proceedings, 1866, p. 20.

the three clinics: Medical, Surgical and Eye and Ear.¹ During the first year, 808 patients were cared for in the hospital at a cost of forty-three cents per day.²

In 1869, a citizen, Michael McDermott, preferred charges of mismanagement against the hospital, complaining that the hospital was in an unhealthy location; the doctors were unskilled; students were allowed at the bed side during deliveries; there was no competent, paid physician in charge of the hospital, and pauper bodies were being used for dissection. A committee was appointed to investigate these charges and in a report submitted on December 11, 1869, completely denied all of them.³

By the third winter the hospital warden was obliged to turn away many who applied for admission due to insufficient room, and the county agent reported that he was "frequently at a loss to know what to do with the sick, or where to send them, to save them from perishing."⁴ Not only was it impossible to accommodate all those who needed care, but patients already admitted were suffering from the overcrowding in the wards and the hospital department of the poorhouse was described by the county physician as being "extremely foul and unhealthy" for the same reason.⁵ The following year a two-story addition containing three new wards was built at a cost of \$7,550. This new wing brought the capacity up to 220 beds and relieved the congestion for a time.⁶

The poorhouse continued to house the chronic sick who were under the supervision of a resident physician. Many of the inmates were suffering from syphilis. In 1869, a resolution was offered by a member of the Board of Supervisors authorizing the Committee on Poor House and Paupers to send to the county hospital such of these cases as the poorhouse physician might designate as treatable in order that they could be furnished proper medical treatment and again made self supporting. It is to the credit of the Board that they adopted this enlightened proposal

¹Ibid., 1869, p. 65.

²Ibid., 1866, p. 19.

³Ibid., December Session, 1869, p. 18.

⁴Ibid., pp. 65, 67.

⁵Ibid., p. 69.

⁶Quine, op. cit., p. 261; Proceedings, September Session, 1870, pp. 25, 39.

without debate.¹

There are occasional bills presented to the Board for nursing care in private homes, although most of those cases which it was possible to identify came from towns outside of Chicago. Here again the early establishment of the almshouse was undoubtedly the reason for the limited use of contract care. An item of \$56 for "taking care of sick persons who could not be removed to Hospital" in the county agent's report for June, 1870, suggests that this practice was resorted to in Chicago only in an emergency.²

Along with institutional care of the sick the county provided medical service in the patients homes. During the early years this was accomplished by paying private physicians for services rendered individual cases. Later a county physician was employed at an annual salary, and by 1866 there were three such physicians for the city of Chicago--one each for the North, South and West Divisions of the city.³ The salary for this position in 1869 was \$500 per year.⁴ In 1870, offers were made by the trustees of the Charity Dispensary of the North Division and the Brainard Free Dispensary to attend the sick poor of the city for a year at a flat rate of \$500 each. These offers were accepted by the Board of Supervisors on a trial basis, and so for the following year only one county physician was appointed whose duties were confined to attending patients at the County Jail and making post-mortem examinations for the coroner.⁵ It should perhaps be explained here that the county physicians had nothing to do with the care of county patients resident outside of Chicago--medical attention for them being provided on a case by case basis by the township supervisors.

Surgical appliances and artificial limbs appear to have been supplied rather generously by the county, but until the very end of the period, every request for a truss was considered by the entire Board of Supervisors.

¹Proceedings, March, 1869, p. 9.

²Ibid., June Session, 1870, p. 44.

³Ibid., 1866, pp. 40-44.

⁴Ibid., December Session, 1869, pp. 4-6. ⁵Ibid., p. 3.

County Provision for the Insane

The principle of state care for the insane which was advocated in the first report of the Board of Charities¹ was not achieved in Cook County until the second decade of the twentieth century. For nearly the entire period under review, the only accommodation for the insane of Chicago and Cook County was that offered in the almshouse under the authority of the poor law. Crude quarters for the insane were to be found in the second almshouse built in 1841, and at Jefferson there was a special wing for them; however it was not until 1869 that the Cook County Insane Asylum was built and something like specialized care provided.

It is probable that we should know more about the early almshouse care if Miss Dorothea Dix had been able to include Cook County in her itinerary when she came to Illinois in 1846. Illness forced her to cancel some of her proposed visits and when the usual "memorial" was presented to the General Assembly, there was no mention of the Cook County almshouse.

At the time of the investigation of the old almshouse on the South Side in 1853, the grand jury reported that: "The room for the insane is most lamentably inadequate for their accommodation; six or eight being lodged in small cells, or more properly stalls, so connected that those but partially insane and quiet are subject to the confusion produced day and night by those who are raving. . . ."² The following year the new county poorhouse was opened at Jefferson where, as has been noted, a separate department housed in a wing adjoining the main building was set aside for the insane. This was a two story brick building with narrow barred windows and was equipped with twenty-one cells measuring seven by eight feet. The iron doors to the cells were fitted with small openings through which food was passed. A tall board fence at the rear of the building enclosed an exercising pen one hundred feet square where the calmer patients were allowed to walk.³ The comforts of this department were described

¹Board of Charities, Report, 1870, p. 237.

²Chicago Weekly Democrat, February 19, 1853.

³Chicago Weekly Times, June 14, 1855.

with considerable acerbity by Dr. George Leininger, the first superintendent of the Chicago State Hospital;

The only heat came from a stove in the corridor which did not raise the temperature in some of the cells above the freezing point. The cold, however, did not freeze out the vermin with which the beds, walls and floors were alive. The arrangements for bathing were so imperfect that during the winter months there were no ablutions of the body; even in summer the number of tubs was too small and they were inconveniently located.

Squalor and mediaeval methods pervaded the place and the same civic intelligence that, in Chicago during the days of the rebellion, permitted a stalward policeman to be the only health officer in the city guided the county's eleemosynary institutions.¹

Complaints of overcrowding and inadequate equipment became so persistent during the late 'sixties that the Committee on Poor House and Paupers advertised for bids for a new building and at a special session of the Board on August 4, 1869, were authorized to proceed with construction.² The building of the Cook County Insane Asylum was the occasion for the large scale graft operations which have already been noted.³ Despite the delays caused by investigations and suits attendant upon the discovery of official dishonesty, it was possible to open the building towards the end of 1870.⁴

The new asylum which stood northeast of the almshouse consisted of a center building in which the offices were located and two wings divided into wards. The building was three stories high and built of brick with cut stone trimmings. Designed for the accommodation of two hundred patients, these new buildings appear to have been considerably better equipped for the comfort of the inmates than was the old one. The heating, which was by steam, and the ventilation were said to have been carefully planned and there were ample bathing facilities on each floor. In the rear

¹History of Medicine and Surgery in Chicago, p. 242.

²Proceedings, December Session, 1868, pp. 29-30; ibid., Special Session, August, 1869, p. 5.

³See above, p. 24.

⁴Statutory authority for the construction by counties of insane asylums did not come until 1874. Revised Statutes, 1874, sec. 25, p. 307.

of the main building was a smaller, two story building which was divided into two parts. On one side were the laundry, drying and ironing rooms while on the other were the bakery and kitchens where all the food for the patients was prepared and brought to the asylum in an iron car. The cost of the buildings was approximately \$135,000, but before the end of the first year of their occupancy, the old familiar cry of overcrowding was heard and it was necessary to spend additional money to equip cells in the basement.¹

Judged by prevailing standards, the physical equipment for the care of both the sick and the insane had now been brought up to date; but the machinery for administration was but little advanced over what it had been in the 'thirties, although in the meantime the population of the city and county had grown enormously and with this had come a corresponding growth in the number and complexity of problems requiring the attention of the county authorities. However, with the remnants of "ox cart" administration that persist in the field of public welfare today, despite an abundant literature on the subject and the existence of some admirable models, it would be unreasonable to be over-critical of the supervisors for their failure in this respect.

The creation and development of the office of county agent represented an advance in the field of outdoor relief that had no counterpart in the administration of the county institutions. Both the hospital and the insane asylum were actually managed by the five members of the Committee on Poor House and Paupers, with some small residual authority loosely divided between the annually elected warden and physician of the two institutions. At this time the weaknesses of the administrative board had not been studied and reported upon, but the unsatisfactory results of this clumsy arrangement were to become very apparent during the next two decades.

¹Henry M. Hurd, The Institutional Care of the Insane in the United States and Canada (Baltimore, 1916), "The Chicago State Hospital" by Dr. George Leininger, pp. 282-83.

PART II - 1871-1893

CHAPTER VI

THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE AGENCY

Growth of the City

The growth of Chicago after the Civil War and particularly during the two decades following the great fire of 1871 can appropriately be described as phenomenal. Almost any data which may be considered an index of growth--the statistics of population, immigration, commerce, industry and manufacturing--show a sharp upswing during the 'seventies and 'eighties; and although this was a period of great industrial and commercial development for the country as a whole, Chicago was affected earlier and her growth during these years was more pronounced than that of any other city in the United States.¹

¹The relative increase in population is strikingly shown in a table adapted from Homer Hoyt's One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago (Chicago, 1933), p. 281.

Relative Increase in Population of Eleven Leading
American Cities, 1850-1890
(1850=100)

Year	Chicago	New York	Detroit	Los Angeles	Cleveland	St. Louis
1850.....	100	100	100	100	100	100
1860.....	356	169	214	270	254	206
1870.....	939	216	390	358	546	400
1880.....	1,680	276	554	700	941	449
1890.....	3,370	360	980	3,130	1,537	579

Year	Baltimore	Boston	Pittsburgh	Cincinnati	New Orleans
1850.....	100	100	100	100	100
1860.....	126	130	115	140	145
1870.....	158	180	205	191	165
1880.....	199	266	345	222	186
1890.....	257	327	506	259	209

Both the war and the fire stimulated this growth. Chicago was prepared to benefit commercially by the war largely on account of its transportation facilities. The first railroad, the Galena and Chicago Union, whose original rolling stock consisted of a second-hand locomotive and six old freight cars, began to operate its ten mile system between Chicago and the Des-plaines River in 1848. The construction of this railroad was almost immediately followed by others which connected Chicago with the seaboard and tapped the newly settled country to the west. The speed with which these improvements were made can be judged when it is known that by 1856 "Chicago was the focus of ten trunk lines with 2,933 miles of track leading to all parts of the country and had fifty-eight passenger and thirty-eight freight trains arriving daily."² With this transportation system already developed, Chicago was particularly well equipped to meet the increased demands for grain and meat which came during the war. Between 1860 and 1862 total grain receipts increased from thirty-one million to over fifty-six million bushels² and the number of hogs packed jumped from 100,000 in 1857-58 to 970,000 in 1862-63.⁴ The gains made at this time were so large as to assure that from then on Chicago rather than St. Louis or Cincinnati was to be the great center of these two industries.

The fire of 1871 which destroyed the business section of the city and caused such suffering for something more than 100,000 persons who were burned out, and which might have been expected to halt, temporarily at least, the city's growth did not have this effect.

Individual lives and fortunes had in a great many cases suffered irreparable misfortune, but the city itself now seemed to come into quicker and fuller life. Within two years the bare ground on State and the streets parallel with it was worth more than land and buildings were before the fire, for the entire destruction of the old business section had cleared the way for all sorts of improvements.⁵

¹Hoyt, op. cit., pp. 54-55. ²Ibid., p. 58.

³Everett Chamberlin, Chicago and Its Suburbs (Chicago, 1874), p. 285.

⁴Moses and Kirkland, op. cit., I, 393.

⁵Ernest L. Bogart and Charles M. Thompson, The Industrial State, 1870-1893, Vol. IV of The Centennial History of Illinois (Chicago, 1922), p. 32.

Railroad and trade connections were strong and eastern capital was poured into the city--something over \$40,000,000 in the year immediately following the fire--to rebuild.¹ Money from the east also came in large quantities during the following years to supplement local investments in manufacturing, the growth of which was spectacular between 1870 and 1890 as may be seen from Table 5.

TABLE 5
GROWTH OF MANUFACTURE IN COOK COUNTY
1870-1890*

Year	Number of Establishments	Average Hands Employed	Capital	Wages	Value of Product
1870	1,440	31,105	\$ 39,372,276	\$ 13,045,286	\$ 92,518,742
1880	3,519	79,414	68,836,885	34,653,462	249,022,948
1890	9,977	210,366	359,739,598	123,955,001	664,567,923

*Data taken from the Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh U. S. Census, Statistics of Manufactures.

TABLE 6
NATIVE AND FOREIGN BORN POPULATION OF CHICAGO
1870-1890*

Year	Total	Native	Foreign Born
1870.....	298,977	154,420	144,557
1880.....	503,185	298,326	204,859
1890.....	1,099,850	650,222	449,628

*Data taken from Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh U. S. Census, Population.

¹Chicago Tribune, October 9, 1872. Cited in Hoyt, op. cit., p. 102.

With the opportunities for earning a living represented by these growing industries, it is not surprising that the population showed a corresponding growth. Three principal sources are said to have contributed to this increase: "Immigration from Europe, migration from other parts of the United States and the excess of Chicago births over deaths."¹ In the decade 1880-90, roughly one-half of the total increase in the city's population was the result of foreign immigration, a large proportion of which during the last years of the decade was the "new" immigration from the southern European countries.

It is important to appreciate the rapidity of this growth and to know something of its causes, if one is to understand the problems which faced the Cook County Commissioners during this period. At this distance one can see readily enough that the county was outgrowing the old form of governmental organization; but as is usually the case, this was not recognized at the time with the consequence that every branch of county government was strained and frequently broke down under the impact of the new demands. The results of this lag in governmental development were particularly evident in the administration of the county charitable institutions. Here in addition to the failure to modernize the administration of these institutions, there was always the problem of expanding the physical plant to keep pace with the growing numbers to be cared for. There was constant overcrowding at the hospital, the poorhouse and the so-called insane asylum and this despite the fact that there was scarcely a year during this entire period when additions were not being made to one or another of these institutions.

Before discussing the efforts of the Board to cope with its expanding responsibilities in the field of public assistance, a word should be said about the extent of destitution during this period.

Extent of Destitution

Implicit in the statistics of population and industry given above were some new factors affecting the problem of desti-

¹Hoyt, op. cit., pp. 282-83.

tution. The first was the increased threat to the economic security of the individual which often accompanies urbanization. The neighborly assistance rendered to tide over an emergency in a small community largely disappears in the impersonal life of a big city and the needy individual is more quickly thrown back on organized charity. This factor, which had been operative even before 1871, undoubtedly became more important as the city grew and was filled with newly arrived immigrant families without roots in the community.

Even more important as a possible source of destitution were the increased physical hazards to wage earners which came with the enormous expansion in industry and manufacturing. Industrial accident statistics are not available for this period, so that the extent to which this acted as a cause of destitution can only be estimated. That it was considerable may be assumed from the fact that factory inspection and the enforcement of safety regulations was just beginning at the very end of this period, while the first workmen's compensation law in Illinois was not enacted until 1911. The sample "case stories" which were a regular feature of the annual reports of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society for many years always showed a large number of families being assisted due to the death or injury of the head of the family in an industrial accident. Less definite information on this point is to be obtained from the county agent's reports; however "widows with small children" and "sickness and injury" were always large categories in the classification of cases which appeared from time to time and suggest industrial accidents or individual disease.

On the other hand, at least one of the old major sources of destitution had disappeared. Cholera epidemics which, as has been seen, took such a large toll during the 'forties and 'fifties were, as a result of improved public health measures, unknown. Epidemic smallpox was to result in increased demands for relief during the years 1893-94, but in the period under review there were no major epidemics.

It is not possible from the existing data to compare the increase in the population of the county's charitable institutions or the numbers receiving relief from the county agent with the in-

crease in the total population of the city.¹ The costs as shown in Table 7, however, may be taken as an approximate measure of the amount of destitution, and if these costs are compared with the population figures in Table 6, it will be seen that there is a rather close correspondence between the two sets of figures: the population doubled twice in the two decades between 1870 and 1890 as did the relief costs.²

TABLE 7

AMOUNTS EXPENDED FOR INSTITUTIONS AND COUNTY AGENT'S OFFICE
AT TEN YEAR PERIODS, 1871-1891^a

Year	Total	Poor-House	Insane Asylum	Hospital	County Agent
1871.....	\$160,418	\$ 69,951	\$ (b)	\$ 38,194	\$ 52,273
1881.....	348,920	162,540	(b)	112,713	73,667
1891.....	631,652	138,907	195,714	189,493	107,536

^aData was not available for 1870 and the figures for 1880 were abnormally high due to graft and dishonesty during 1879. For this reason the above years were selected rather than the census years.

^bSeparate accounts for the Insane Asylum and Poorhouse were not kept until 1882. The figure for the Poorhouse includes cost of operating the Insane Asylum.

^cInclusion of the amounts spent for the care of dependent children under the Industrial School Acts would increase the total for 1891 by approximately \$30,000.

It seems safe to assume, therefore, that "pauperism" was not on the increase, as was so frequently suggested during this

¹The reports of the county institutions are not comparable year by year and the figure available from the county agent's reports are usually the number of times relief had been given during a three-month period rather than an unduplicated count of the families or persons served. For this reason the data covering total cost seems a more reliable index of this increase.

²As will be shown later, the improvement in standards of relief or institutional care was not such as to affect seriously this comparison.

period, and that the larger amounts spent on public assistance merely followed the growth in population. The absolute increase in the amounts spent was, however, very large and entailed problems in administration for the county commissioners that had previously been unknown.

The County Board

It will be recalled that Cook County had adopted township organization in 1849 and had substituted the county board of supervisors for the old court of three commissioners.¹ As new towns were carved out of Cook County, the number of supervisors had increased so that by 1869 there were fifty members on this board. When it is remembered that this board had extensive administrative as well as legislative duties, it will be seen that it was an unwieldy body for this purpose. The need for reform became increasingly apparent as the county's business grew in volume and in complexity. Some of the administrative work was delegated to committees "with power to act," however many minor details required the vote of the entire board. Another factor which made for dissatisfaction was the unequal representation which the city of Chicago had on this board. Measures which were of interest and necessary for the city could be defeated by the members of the towns outside of Chicago who had a majority, although they represented but a fraction of the county population.

This situation had become so acute by 1869 that a petition was sent by the Board to the Constitutional Convention then sitting at Springfield, urging upon this body the "necessity of devising some equitable means for reducing the number of members of this board and thus, by reducing the number, lessen the expenses and increase the efficiency."² When the work of this convention was completed, the new Constitution of 1870 contained provision for a change by the legislature in the governmental organization of Cook County.³ At the next session of the legislature a law was passed abolishing the Board of Supervisors and replacing it with a Board of Commissioners consisting of fifteen

¹See above, p. 6. ²Proceedings, December 23, 1869.

³Illinois Constitution, 1870, Art. X, sec. 7.

men, ten of whom were to be elected from the city of Chicago. Five of the members were to be elected for one year terms, five for two and the remaining five for three year terms. The duties and powers of the new board, however, remained just as they had been under the Board of Supervisors.¹

Two committees each consisting of five commissioners were to be appointed each year to have charge of the county's charitable institutions: the Hospital Committee and the Committee on Poor House and Paupers. The name of this latter committee which controlled the poorhouse, the insane asylum, and the county agent's office was changed to the Committee on Public Charities in 1873. By 1882, the duties of this committee had become so heavy that it was necessary to divide the work. The Committee on Public Charities continued to administer the institutions, but a new committee on City Relations and City Relief was established to have charge of the county agent's office.² Since these three committees were concerned with the letting of contracts for supplies involving large sums of money, membership on them was much sought after, and, as will be seen, advantage was frequently taken of this favorable position for graft.³

A point that should be stressed here is that these committees were administrative rather than supervisory in nature and that the members, both individually and collectively participated in the day by day administration of the institutions. The relationship between the committees and the wardens of the institutions was never clearly defined during this period. Presumably the wardens were in charge of the institutions and were accountable to the board as a whole, although it is obvious that under such a system it was impossible to place responsibility. To make matters worse it was not unusual for the entire board to interest itself in some small detail of administration.⁴ The effects of

¹Laws of 1871, secs. 1 and 2, p. 11.

²See below, p. 102.

³See below, pp. 91-95.

⁴The preoccupation of the commissioners in the domestic detail of the institutions sometimes reached the point of being ludicrous as for example their resolutions and debate over the purchase of a few hogs for the poor farm or their deliberations on the subject of cow feed (Proceedings, 1874-75, pp. 29, 57, 301).

such diffused authority will be seen in the discussion of the administration of the individual institutions.

In addition to these committees, there were certain others to which problems of poor relief administration were occasionally referred. The most important of these were the committees on Judiciary and on Public Buildings. Prior to the reorganization of the board in 1887, opinions on the legality of proposed changes in matters of relief were referred to the Committee on Judiciary, although after that time such questions were more often referred to the County Attorney. The Committee on Public Buildings was presumably concerned with repairs and the construction of all county buildings, however the two committees having charge of the hospital and the institutions at Dunning usually succeeded in retaining control of their own building operations, although not always without a struggle. When repairs were needed at the poorhouse in 1872, both the Committee on Poor House and Paupers and the Committee on Public Buildings fought for the privilege of supervising these repairs. In this particular contest the Committee on Public Buildings won and was allowed to award the contracts.¹ The findings of the grand jury which investigated the whole system of purchasing and awarding of contracts in 1876 revealed the fact that these two committees were about equally adept in awarding contracts where they would pay the largest returns to the members and that the public interest and economy were never deciding factors.

Personnel Policies²

Until 1881, all county officers were elected annually by vote of the entire board. Several candidates were nominated for each position, and it was often necessary to have a number of ballots before a choice was made. In the field of public assistance the principal officers to be elected were a county agent, wardens

¹Ibid., March Session, 1872, p. 31

²More detailed discussions of questions of personnel, purchasing and graft are to be found in the sections dealing with the administration of the various institutions. The present discussion is included here so that the reader may understand the general functioning of the board.

for the poorhouse, insane asylum and hospital, a physician for the insane asylum and a county physician, along with engineers for these institutions.¹ After 1881, a slate was drawn up in majority caucus and presented by the chairmen of the board in the form of a resolution. The fact that the chairman was, until 1887, elected by a majority vote of the board usually made it possible to push through this resolution without much difficulty.² Parenthetically it should be noted that the division of the board into a majority and minority voting bloc was not always on the basis of party affiliations. There were years when the Irish were said to control the board and others when the Germans were in power. For several years the board was split between the corrupt "ring"³ and a small minority who opposed the organized grafting carried on by the former group.

The annual turnover in county officers between 1871 and 1887 was not so rapid as might be expected under such a system, as may be seen from Table 8, the chief reason for this being that the commissioners' overlapping, three year terms made it possible for a majority to retain control for a number of years. In 1886, the term of the commissioners was reduced to one year, and from that time on the turnover was greater. The selection of persons to fill these positions was made not on the basis of qualifications, but rather as a reward for political services rendered. For example, W. J. McGarigle, Warden of the County Hospital for a number of years, was a well-known politician who could "deliver" the Twelfth Ward vote at election time.

In addition to these principal officers, there were various minor employees appointed directly by the board. These were the matrons, assistant engineers, storekeepers, etc. According to the rules of the board, all other employees were appointed by

¹There were changes in the titles of the heads of the poorhouse and insane asylum from time to time, depending on whether the commissioners decided to have a medical or lay person in charge of these institutions. Occasionally too the experiment of having a single person in charge of both institutions was tried. See notes to Table 8.

²The election of the chairman was a time-consuming process. In 1879, one hundred and nine ballots were taken before a choice could be made.

³See below, pp. 91-95.

the heads of the respective institutions. Actually these jobs (attendants, cooks, orderlies, clerks) were apportioned among the commissioners as patronage. This, of course, meant that the head of the institution did not hire and could not discharge his subordinates, with the natural result that there was little discipline. The effects of such a system on the care provided the inmates of the institutions can readily be foreseen. Periodically there was public protest against this system and the commissioners would reluctantly go through the motions of an investigation;¹ however no real efforts were made to do away with this system of appointment. At the end of this period George S. Sawyer, superintendent of the Dunning institutions, said upon completing his year of office that,

Some day some party is going to be brave enough to place the Cook County Insane Asylum and Poor House out of the reach of politicians. When that is done the county will get better returns for their money invested. . . The present system is a farce. . . . I am very free to say that I have carried worthless employes on the pay roll all through the year on account of a 'Court House pull.'²

Fiscal Control and Purchasing

The Cook County commissioners had power to levy two taxes: the first a levy not to exceed \$1.00 on the \$100 valuation to be used exclusively for the payment of principal and interest on the indebtedness of the county contracted before the adoption of the Constitution of 1870. The other, which could not exceed 75 cents on the \$100 valuation was to be expended for (a) the interest and principal charges on indebtedness incurred after 1870; (b) building purposes and (c) the annual operating expenses of the county.³ With the consent of the voters, the county could also issue bonds to the extent of 5 per cent of the assessed taxable property in the county.⁴

Up until 1887 the annual operating expenses of the county were estimated and taxes levied according to no discernible plan.

¹See below, pp. 133-35. ²Proceedings, 1892-93, p. 88.

³Illinois Revised Statutes, 1874, c. 34, sec. 25.

⁴Ibid., sec. 40.

TABLE 8

OFFICERS IN CHARGE OF COUNTY CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS
AND COUNTY AGENT'S OFFICE, 1871-1893

Year	County Agent	Warden Poorhouse ^a	Warden Hospital	Physician Insane Asylum
1871-72.....	John Dieden	G.S. Kimberly	G.W. Reynolds	Dr. Ben C. Miller
1872-73.....	John Dieden	G.S. Kimberly	G.W. Reynolds	Dr. Ben C. Miller
1873-74.....	John Dieden	G.S. Kimberly	H. McLaughlin	Dr. J.W. Tope
1874-75.....	John Dieden	G.S. Kimberly	H. McLaughlin	Dr. G.P. Cunningham
1875-76.....	John Dieden	G.S. Kimberly	H. McLaughlin	Dr. G.P. Cunningham
1876-77.....	P.J. O'Connell	H.M. Peters	H. McLaughlin	Dr. J.C. Spray
1877-78.....	P. McGrath	H.M. Peters	D.W. Miller	Dr. J.C. Spray
1878-79.....	P. McGrath	H.M. Peters	D.W. Miller	Dr. J.C. Spray
1879-80.....	P. McGrath	H.M. Peters	D.W. Miller	Dr. J.C. Spray
1880-81.....	P. McGrath	H.M. Peters	Joseph Dixon	Dr. J.C. Spray
1881-82.....	P. McGrath	H.M. Peters	Joseph Dixon	Dr. J.C. Spray
1882-83.....	P. McGrath	C.L. Frey	Joseph Dixon	Dr. J.C. Spray
1883-84.....	P. McGrath	C.L. Frey	Joseph Dixon	Dr. J.C. Spray
1884-85.....	James O'Brien	C.L. Frey	W.J. McGarigle	Dr. J.G. Kiernan
1885-86.....	James O'Brien	C.L. Frey	W.J. McGarigle	Dr. J.C. Spray
1886-87.....	James O'Brien	C.L. Frey	W.J. McGarigle	Dr. J.C. Spray
1887-88.....	A.J. Galloway	Dr. T.J. Conley ^b	John Stephens	Dr. J.C. Spray
1888-89c.....	A.S. Reynolds	Dr. T.J. Conley	John Stephens	Dr. J.C. Spray
1889-90.....	John Foley	Dr. J.P. Smyth	John Stephens	Dr. J.G. Kiernan and W.L. Noble
1890-91.....	John Foley	Dr. J.P. Smyth	J.C. Strain	Dr. J.A. Benson
1891-92.....	John Foley	Dr. A.H. Wimmermark and J.R. Pyne	J.B. Taylor	Dr. J.A. Benson
1892-93.....	C.O. Williamson	Geo. S. Sawyer ^d	G.W. Deal	G.S. Sawyer ^d

^aUntil 1885-86 the warden of the poorhouse was also the warden of the insane asylum. The position of warden of the insane asylum existed only for the two-year period, 1885-87. From that time on the physician also acted as warden.

^bTitle of this office changed to Medical Superintendent of the Poorhouse.

^cTime of election changed from December 1 to January 1.

^dAfter 1892, both the poorhouse and insane asylum were under the direction of a General Superintendent and the physicians at both institutions were subordinate to him although still appointed by the board.

With minor exceptions the money available for current expenses was all placed in a general account having no special funds and drawn upon as needed and as long as it lasted. Between 1873 and 1877, the full amount of 75 cents was not levied and there was usually a balance left in the treasury at the end of each year, the reason for this being that the assessments were high and in addition the board had been authorized to issue \$1,500,000 in bonds for building purposes. After 1877, the maximum levy was made every year except 1881. During the years that the "ring" was in control of the board, this annual balance was changed to a deficit and in 1887, when the members of this "ring" were finally indicted and removed from the board, had mounted to approximately \$1,250,000.¹ The public revelations which came at this time of the loose manner in which the county's funds were being expended, resulted in the passage of a law which placed some checks on the method of appropriation.²

Purchase of supplies for the institutions and the county agent's office was in the hands of the committees, except for emergency purchases which might be made by the institution heads. In the main the procedure followed was that the wardens and county agent submitted monthly requisitions to their appropriate committees, who in turn "shopped" around to find the most favorable firm with which to place the order. The bills for these supplies were then audited by the same committee that had authorized them and recommended to the board for payment. Since the majority of the board sat as members of one or more of the committees that made large purchases, the bills were usually approved as a matter of mutual "courtesy."

The awarding of contracts for supplying the institutions with bread, milk, meat, and clothing was annually the occasion for a heated contest. The idea of having sealed bids, opened only in the presence of the entire board was unknown. Each committee solicited its own bids and then presented them to the board with recommendations. What actually took place at these meetings is, of course, not made a part of the record, but the reports included in the Proceedings at least suggest the tactics

¹Proceedings, 1888-89, pp. 858-59.

²See below, "Reform,"

adopted. When agreement on the awarding of a contract could not be reached, a motion would be made for a brief adjournment at the conclusion of which there was frequently a majority converted to the idea of approving that particular contract. At other times consideration of contracts would be deferred by motion until a later meeting. In the interim a favored contractor whose bid had been high would discover that he could "shave" his price a little and would be given permission to submit the lower bid. Between 1873 and 1879 the record of the early meetings of the board each year are filled with such suggestions of graft.

As early as 1874, a small minority of the board began to work for an investigation of the system of purchasing. One of the Chicago newspapers reported that supplies furnished by one of the contractors to the county agent's office were of miserable quality and not fit for distribution.¹ Advantage was taken of this publicity by the reform element on the county board to ask for the appointment of an investigating committee. The majority of the board wanted no inquiry into the matter and defeated the resolution.² A few months later, however, the same member (George M. Bogue) who had introduced the first resolution again demanded an investigation, and this time supplied his own evidence. He produced a long list of items furnished by the grocery firm of James Forsyth & Company showing the contract price and the price which the county actually paid which was, in every instance, from 2 to 200 per cent more. In the face of this evidence, the board was driven to appoint a committee to investigate.³ This committee, which included none of the reform members, found no evidence of graft and explained the difference between the price paid and the stipulated price on the grounds that the "contracts had been too low in the first place."⁴

In December, 1874, another committee was appointed to inquire into the matter, and this time it was necessary to include some of the reform members on the committee due to the criticism

¹Chicago Times, January 13, 1874.

²Proceedings, March Session, 1874, p. 73.

³Ibid., June Session, pp. 108-9.

⁴Ibid., September Session, pp. 58-62.

that was appearing in the newspapers.¹ This committee found that the warden of the poorhouse, George S. Kimberly, was exchanging supplies purchased for the poorhouse for articles he wanted himself through one of the contractors. The Committee on Public Charities prevented this report from being submitted, however, until this same warden could be re-elected.²

During the next year and a half various committees reported and the contract system was discarded and then resumed. The minority reports of these investigations were never adopted, but public interest in the proceedings was finally aroused to the point where a grand jury investigation was called for.³ After several weeks spent in accumulating evidence the grand jury stated in its indictment that: "By laborious efforts, ably seconded by the prosecuting attorneys, we have, in one case at least, broken through the wall of perjury which has hitherto screened a long and systematic robbery of the public, has poisoned the cup and the crust given to God's poor in the name of charity, has stolen the loaf from the hungry, the medicine from the sick, clothes from the naked, and divided the accursed plunder among the sworn officers appointed to guard and feed, and protect these unfortunate wards of the county."⁴ Among those named in this indictment were the warden of the poorhouse, George Kimberly, who later admitted that he had made about \$25,000 during the five

¹Ibid., December Session, p. 6.

²Ibid., pp. 68-73.

³Ibid., pp. 74-75; 1875, p. 305; 1876, pp. 49-51, 58-60. It was during this period that the Citizens' Association was formed (1874); an organization which was frequently to act as critic of the county board and to which may be traced a number of reforms in city and county government. In his annual address for 1875, the president of this association said, "The City Council and County Board are about equally prolific in outrages upon the people, and need the constant supervision of an Association such as this has now grown to be. Each week produces some new specimen of rascality in one of these boards; and abstract jobs, contract jobs, illegal salary jobs, the well established trade in franchises, and the whole motley troop of rascalities will march by as usual from year's end to year's end unless halted by some Citizens' Association" (Reports of the Citizens' Association of Chicago, 1874-87, p. 23).

⁴Chicago Times, June 2, 1876.

years he had been warden; the chairman of the county board and four present and former members of the Committee on Public Charities. In a trial which the newspapers described as "farcical," all of the commissioners were found not guilty,¹ and in a later trial Kimberly was also freed.²

The only positive results from this revelation of misappropriation of public funds was the passage of a law at the next session of the legislature which limited the amounts which could be spent by a committee without the approval of a majority of the board. From this time on no committee was to be given the "power to act" when this involved the expenditure of more than \$500; all appropriations above this amount had to be approved by a two-thirds vote of the board.³ This attempt to protect the county's funds was only a small patch on a bad system and did not envisage the situation which developed several years later when a majority of the board were proven to be dishonest.

The "Ring"

In reviewing the history of Cook County government some years after the period under discussion, the then president of the county board observed that:

Governmental developments usually come in cycles. Revolutions, either moral or physical, mark out the mile-posts along the route, and accomplish, either by uprooting or the winnowing process, all advances in public standards. After each upheaval public attention becomes distracted from the routine of public business, which in consequence drifts along until some fresh official indignity or discovery arouses the sense of duty, and secures the enactment of new measures, either for safety or expediency. After each fresh storm follows the calm, and frequently the calm develops into stagnation worse than the original condition. . . .⁴

If this theory of cyclical development is applied to Cook County government and particularly to the field of public assistance, the decade between 1876 and 1886 may be regarded as the calm.

¹Ibid., September 30, 1876.

²Chicago Tribune, October 4, 10, 1877.

³Laws of 1879, p. 80.

⁴D. D. Healy, Official Messages to Board of Cook County Commissioners (Chicago, 1898), p. 13.

The Citizens' Association which had been active in securing the investigation of the scandals of 1876 confined its attention almost exclusively during these years to attempts to reform the city government, and comment or criticism of the administration of the county institutions was infrequent in the press. There was a sharp drop in the costs of operating these institutions after 1876 and until 1883 the small annual variations in the amounts spent could be explained in terms of the increased total population to be cared for. The heads of the various institutions were regularly reappointed during this period; there were no important additions made to the physical plant and no significant changes in methods of administration.

The end of the calm may be dated roughly in 1883 when the new and rather extensive additions which were made to the poorhouse¹ caused a rise in operating expenses. This increase which was approximately \$100,000 per year for the three institutions until 1884, suddenly jumped to \$200,000 in 1885 and by 1886 the total costs had reached nearly a million dollars. The other expenses of government mounted along with the expenditures for public assistance, and at the end of each fiscal year the deficit was larger. In the face of this growing deficit and the issuance of an increasing amount of "county orders" to contractors and merchants, the Citizens' Association instituted proceedings in 1885 to test the authority of the county commissioners to make contracts in excess of the amount of money available from taxation or other miscellaneous receipts as estimated at the beginning of the fiscal year. An order was obtained enjoining the board from letting a contract to drill an artesian well at the poorhouse for the reason that no means of payment had been provided for. This temporary order was dissolved on the grounds that "so long as there remained any money in the county treasury, no matter how small the amount, nor what the future needs of the county might be, that sum, or any part of it, might be taken for the first necessities of the county, and that the discretion of the board was absolute as to the necessity of the well."² This

¹See below, pp. 136-37.

²Citizens' Association, Annual Report, 1886, p. 26.

decision, of course, made it possible for the board to contract for supplies and building without reference to the amount of money in the treasury with the result that there were over \$1,000,000 worth of county orders outstanding at the beginning of 1886. The two-thirds vote required by law for the appropriation of amounts in excess of \$500 could always be obtained because the "ring" controlled the necessary ten out of the fifteen votes.

The election of 1886 brought five new members to the board and the "ring" majority was reduced to one vote. The reform members were now able to take some part in the awarding of contracts, and their position was strengthened by the fact that the newly elected treasurer insisted that "no such obligation or indebtedness as a county order is known to or recognized by the law" and further that the taxes of 1887 could not be used for the expenses of previous years unless there was a surplus at the end of the year, in which case these unsettled bills (whether county orders had been issued or not) must be reaudited.¹ The adoption of this position caused great consternation among both the board members and the county creditors, but since no legal basis could be discovered by the "ring" for refusal to reaudit the bills, it was necessary to submit.

When the bills and contracts were inspected and published by the Finance Committee of the newly organized board (the majority of the members of this committee belonged to the reform group), the evidence of fraud on an enormous scale was at once apparent. Since the membership of the "ring" was about evenly divided between the two major political parties, both the Democrat and the Republican controlled press made charges of conspiracy. Private funds were raised and placed in the hands of trustees to carry on an investigation. The facts presented to the grand jury showed that there had been corruption in every part of the county government, but that the largest amount of graft had been practiced in connection with the awarding of contracts for supplies for the hospital and Dunning institutions.

The leader of the conspiracy proved to be W. J. McGarigle, warden of the county hospital, and it was this institution which

¹Ibid., 1887, p. 36.

suffered most from the operations of the "ring." A few examples will illustrate the lengths to which this group went to defraud the county.

For several years the county plumbing contract was regularly awarded to D. T. Boyle & Company, which firm consistently overcharged the county for what work they actually did and in addition submitted bills and were paid large amounts for repairs and installations that were never made. In this case D. T. Boyle was the assistant engineer at the hospital while the "& Co." was Edward McDonald, the engineer.¹ Similarly the Chicago Pharmaceutical Company which had a monopoly on supplying the hospital with a "patented" bandage existed only as desk space in a downtown office building. The "Company" was Frank Murphy, druggist at the hospital. The contract for hardware for all county institutions was annually awarded to C. Sokup & Company because "Charley Sokup carried the Bohemian vote in his vest pocket." When Mr. Sokup's bills were audited, it was found that his prices were not only much higher than wholesale prices, but from two to three hundred per cent higher than prevailing retail prices.²

Large amounts of furniture suitable only for a private home were bought and charged to the county (and subsequently found in the homes of certain county employees and commissioners); pipes carrying cold water were covered with an expensive insulating material; the courthouse was thoroughly "daubed" with a useless preservative and so it went, with every contractor paying some sort of tribute to the "ring."³

An example of the fearless manner in which all of this was carried on is to be seen in the frequency with which the following item appeared on Warden McGarigle's petty cash account: "One case of champagne for 12th Ward Headquarters--On doctor's orders." Needless to say these accounts were always approved for payment.⁴ The hospital had degenerated into a roadhouse where dishonest politicians were lavishly entertained at county expense;

¹Chicago Tribune, February 3, 1887.

²Ibid., February 4, 1887.

³Ibid., January 14, February 3, 1887.

⁴Proceedings, 1886-87, pp. 418-20.

in 1886, nine hundred gallons of whiskey were consumed at the hospital.¹

The warden of the hospital and the engineer, Edward McDonald, along with Harry Varnell, warden of the insane asylum, were indicted in March, 1887, for conspiracy.² Four county commissioners and ex-commissioners and Charles Frey, warden of the poorhouse, were indicted a few days later on the same charges,³ and finally on April 9th, the grand jury presented 306 indictments; 106 against county employees and contractors and 200 against commissioners and ex-commissioners, many of whom were indicted several times.⁴ The trial of these men lasted for more than a year, but in the end eleven of the defendants were found guilty; seven receiving sentences of two years imprisonment and the others fines of \$1,000. Warden McGarigle was found guilty of fraud, but escaped from the sheriff and fled to Canada.⁵

Reform

On August 15, 1887, the resignations of the eight "ring" members of the board were accepted and at the next meeting, the board proceeded to organize under rules adopted in conformance with the newly enacted laws for the government of Cook County.⁶ Before summarizing this legislation, a word should be said concerning the reaction which followed this upheaval.

The public was thoroughly aroused and demanded an immediate reduction in county expenditures and the reformed board acceded to this demand by making a careful scrutiny of the charitable institutions. In at least one instance, resentment against the manner in which these institutions had been administered seems to have been carried over to the unfortunate inmates of them. The new president of the board in his first address insisted that the Dunning Institution which had been known as the "Infirmarium"

¹Ibid., p. 127. ²Chicago Tribune, March 16, 1887.

³Ibid., March 26, 1887. ⁴Ibid., April 9, 1887.

⁵Moses and Kirkland, op. cit., II, 218-19; Chicago Tribune, August 1, 1887; February 17, 1888.

⁶Proceedings, 1886-87, pp. 378-85.

since 1883 again be known as the "Poorhouse," obviously for the deterrent sound of the word. At the same time he expressed his regret that there was apparently no legal way of abolishing all "outdoor" relief.¹ Actually the county agent's office was closed for a number of months until the cold winter months and complaints of the private agencies forced the county to resume relief in the homes of the poor.² The question of the county's responsibility to maintain a hospital was also discussed during the next year or so. Some of the members were in favor of abandoning it altogether, while others thought the city should be forced to take it over.³

The point which needs emphasis here is that despite these proposals to abolish or abridge the county's obligations towards the destitute, Cook County did not follow in the footsteps of Boston, Brooklyn and Philadelphia where the public authorities at a little earlier date but as a result of similar revelations of graft in the administration of their public charities, handed the administration of home relief over to the private agencies. The principle that the care of the poor is a public responsibility was adhered to in Cook County, and if the care provided was usually inadequate, and sometimes hopelessly so, there is no evidence that the relief "extracted" from relatives and pieced out from various other sources by the private agencies was much better.⁴

Gains were made in the special legislation enacted in 1887 for the government of Cook County. Two objectives are apparent in these laws: The first, as might be expected, was an attempt to surround the county's funds and their expenditure with a greater degree of protection against graft, while the second was an effort, only partly successful, to modernize the administrative organization. All of the loopholes for dishonesty were not closed up and the laws themselves gave no assurance that the public assistance function would be handled more competently. These laws, however, did make any large scale graft much more difficult and brought some order into county fiscal management

The new law reduced the term of the commissioners from

¹Ibid., pp. 392-93.

²See below, p. 112.

³Proceedings, 1886-87, pp. 393-94; 1887-88, p. 661.

⁴See below, pp. 121-26.

three years to one year and made provision for a president of the board to be elected by the people to take the place of the chairman who had been elected by the members of the board.¹ The purpose in shortening the terms of the commissioners was obviously to prevent the growth of "vested interests" within the board, however at the same time it had the disadvantage of placing a completely new administration, unfamiliar with the work, in office each year. This meant not only an annual change in the personnel of the board, but also of the institutions, from the warden to the lowest paid attendant since, as we have seen, the personnel system was out and out one of patronage.²

A further change in the internal organization of the board was provided for by the creation of two standing committees, one on Finance and the other on Public Service, to replace the fourteen committees which had previously existed.³ Here again the desire to keep the county institutions free from the control of a small group can be seen. Actually a number of sub-committees were appointed which continued to manage the affairs of the institutions just as the old standing committees had. The fact that the personnel of these committees changed annually was some protection against the development of "vested interests," but it also meant that each year a new committee, totally unfamiliar with the

¹Laws of 1887, p. 149.

²The wastes and inefficiency resulting from this annual housecleaning were so apparent, that a compromise law was passed shortly after the end of this period raising the terms to two years (Laws of 1893, p. 92). The possibility of appointing the heads of the insane asylum and poorhouse for five-year terms was also discussed; however when this question was referred to the county attorney for an opinion, he held that such appointments would not be binding on later boards (Proceedings, 1888-89, pp. 411, 415). When the county civil service law was passed in 1895, the offices of warden of the hospital, superintendent of the insane asylum and poorhouse and county agent were not included, although most of the subordinate positions were brought under its protection (Laws of 1895, p. 137).

³Laws of 1887, p. 150, sec. 1, par. 7. The fourteen administrative committees that were abolished were: Jail and Criminal Court, Public Charities, Finance, Court House and Records, Public Service, Judiciary, City Relations and Relief, Education, Public Buildings, Hospital, Towns and Town Accounts, Printing and Stationery, Juries and Equalization of Taxes, Roads, Bridges and Licenses.

work, was turned loose on the institutions to learn by trial and error how they should be managed. The law did not specify the size of the two committees which were appointed by the president. By rules adopted by the board, the Committee on Public Service consisted of fourteen members and the president ex-officio, while the Committee on Finance had five, again with the president as an ex-officio member.¹

Two new statutory offices were created: the Superintendent of Public Service (appointed by the president with the approval of the board) who was to be the executive officer of the Committee on Public Service and whose duty it was to "purchase, receive and distribute all supplies necessary for the use and service of Cook County and its various institutions." The other was the office of comptroller, and it was provided that the county clerk should fill this office ex-officio and in this capacity be the executive of the Finance Committee.² The creation of these two offices helped to correct some of the unsatisfactory conditions which had previously existed as a result of diffused responsibility.

In addition to these changes in organization there were several improvements in the procedure for appropriating and purchasing prescribed in the law. The budget system was introduced by requiring an annual appropriation bill in which was set forth the total amount of money to be spent for the fiscal year and the specific objects and purposes for which it was to be used. No other appropriation might be made during the year except in case of disaster, and this only by a four-fifths vote. The amount of the annual appropriation could not be in excess of the last previous assessment or over the constitutional limit.³ This was a decided gain over the old method of appropriating to a general fund with no individual accounts. It was now necessary to develop some sort of financial planning for the institutions and it was possible to compare the monthly expenditures from year to year by reference to the comptroller's reports.

All resolutions or motions involving the expenditure of

¹Proceedings, 1886-87, pp. 381-85.

²Laws of 1887, p. 150. ³Ibid., sec. 1, par. 6.

money were now required to be in writing, and if adopted by the board, could not take effect until signed by the president with the provision that his veto could be overridden by a four-fifths vote.¹ It was further provided that contracts for supplies and work for the county should be let to the lowest responsible bidder after advertising except for emergency purchases amounting to less than \$500.² Some additional safeguards were included in the rules adopted by the reformed board: Requisitions calling for supplies exceeding the sum of \$500 could not be divided to avoid the requirement of approval by the board;³ all contracts had to be signed by the president, superintendent of Public Service and the comptroller;⁴ and the committee clerk was required to keep a record of all committee meetings showing the names of the members present, the voting on all reports, and where contracts were considered, the amounts of all bids and by whom made.⁵

Summary

Even before 1871, there was evidence that the form of government in Cook County was poorly adapted to the increasing amount of business to be carried on. In the period between 1871 and 1893, which saw a rapid growth in population and an enormous expansion in manufacturing, industry, and commerce, and which brought with it new and more difficult problems of government, this failure to keep pace became even more marked. Public revelations on two occasions of large scale graft and dishonesty resulted in the enactment of laws designed to give more protection to the expenditure of public funds, and in fact succeeded in introducing a hitherto unknown element of planning into the county's fiscal policies. However, the essential feature of this form of governmental organization, i.e., administration by committees rather than by permanent, salaried executives, which showed itself to be completely unsatisfactory when applied to the county's institutions for dependent persons, persisted throughout the period. Equally persistent and unsatisfactory in its results was the tradition of

¹Ibid., par. 1.

²Ibid., par. 8.

³Proceedings, 1886-87, p. 383, Rule 6.

⁴Ibid., p. 385, Rule 19. ⁵Ibid., p. 383, Rule 7.

patronage as a personnel policy.

However, in spite of the insistence of those who looked with despair on the commissioners' administration of relief that this job be handed over to the private agencies, and despite the precedents for such action to be found at this time in some of the great eastern cities, the principle that the care of the poor is a public responsibility survived in Cook County.

CHAPTER VII

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RELIEF IN THE HOMES OF THE CHICAGO POOR

Note has already been taken of the fact that at an earlier date, both in this country and abroad, the question of providing relief in the homes of the poor at public expense was frequently debated and that at times "outdoor relief" was subject to such criticism that it was completely abolished. The principal reason advanced for discontinuing this form of relief was invariably the same, namely: that it encouraged "pauperism." This, of course, was the old Malthusian theory which had carried so much weight with the English poor law reformers of 1834, and which indirectly had such a powerful influence in this country on the development of poor relief.¹

We have also noted that in Cook County there were great things promised each time the experiment of abolishing this type of relief was tried, but that when it was found necessary to resume it, there was never any explanation as to why it was impossible or impractical to continue the policy. It can scarcely be assumed that the commissioners were prompted to make these experiments through any desire deliberately to persecute the poor, and so one is forced to the conclusion that they were probably sincere in their belief that it did encourage "pauperism."

In the period under review the question of "outdoor relief" continued to be argued and discussed, not only in the commissioners' chambers but in the reports of the state boards of charities and in the proceedings of the recently formed National

¹While it is unlikely that many of the public officials in this country were familiar with Malthus' Essay on Population, there can be little doubt that they were aware of his theory as it found expression in the reports of the Royal Commissions and in the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. On at least one occasion extracts from the 1834 Report were quoted by one of the Cook County commissioners to support his contention that all public home relief should be abolished in the city of Chicago (Proceedings, 1886-87, p. 393).

Conference on Charities and Corrections.¹ New issues were now being introduced however as a result of the growing importance of large private relief giving agencies in the principal cities, and the development during the last quarter of the century of the Charity Organization movement in this country.

The whole question of the relationship between the public and private agencies administering relief was very much in the foreground during these years and the developments in Chicago are of particular interest. Here the question turned on the division of the field between the county agent's office and the Chicago Relief and Aid Society which had grown into a very powerful agency as a result of its work in relieving the sufferers of the fire of 1871. Before discussing these relationships, however, it is necessary to review some of the changes which took place in the administration of home relief by the county agent during this second period.

The County Agent's Office

In the period 1871-93, there were no substantial changes in the organization of this office. As has been noted, the work of the Committee on Public Charity of the County Board was divided in 1883 and a new Committee on City Relations and Relief formed to have oversight over the affairs of the county agent's office.² The effects of this separation of institutional and home relief were imperceptible as far as the quality of either service was concerned. If these had been supervisory committees and if the members had been permitted to serve on the committees long enough to become familiar with the work and to see the relationship existing between the institutional and non-institutional programs, this separation might have been regarded as a loss. As it was, it only meant that the members had more time to become involved in the administrative details of the two departments.

Between 1871 and 1886, there were only four county agents

¹Discussion of some of the papers on this subject which were read at early sessions of the Conference is to be found in Edith Abbott's "Abolish the Pauper Laws," Social Service Review, VIII (March, 1934), 1-16.

²Proceedings, 1883-84, p. 7.

while in the next six years this office was filled by five different men, only one of whom served more than a year. The positions of visitors and clerks which completed the staff continued to be awarded as patronage by the board. By the end of this period the volume of work had so increased that each of the city commissioners had the awarding of three or four of these positions. Some of these appointments were only for the winter months when the relief load was always higher. In 1892, the staff, in addition to the county agent and his assistant, included 7 clerks, 25 visitors and some miscellaneous employees, all of whom were new appointments.¹ The effects on the continuity and quality of work of such a complete turnover (which was the rule rather than the exception) can readily be imagined. During the winter of 1891-92, women visitors were appointed for the first time. One of the two women appointed at this time was a Hull House resident, Julia Lathrop, who was later to render such distinguished service as a member of the State Board of Charities and become the first chief of the United States Children's Bureau. Many years afterwards, Jane Addams in speaking of this appointment said that "The Commissioners were at first dubious of the value of such a visitor and predicted that a woman would be a perfect 'coal shute' for giving away county supplies, but they gradually came to depend upon her suggestions and advice."² It was as a result of this experience as a county visitor that Julia Lathrop was able to write so feelingly of the Cook County public charities. Frequent reference will be made to this account since it is almost the only description of these facilities which takes into consideration the point of view of those who were driven to utilize them.³

Two offices were maintained where applications for relief were accepted; a central office at 29 South Canal Street (later moved to 120 South Clinton) and a branch at 6251 South State Street which was opened in 1889 shortly after the town of Lake and the village of Hyde Park were taken into the city.⁴

¹Proceedings, 1892-93, p. 180.

²Twenty Years at Hull House (New York: T. Y. Crowell & Co., 1910), pp. 311-12.

³Julia Lathrop, "The Cook County Charities" in Hull House Maps and Papers (New York, 1895).

⁴Proceedings, 1889-90, p. 842. In this same year two

Applications were also accepted at these two offices from city residents for admission to the county hospital, the almshouse and the detention hospital for the insane. In the towns outside of the city, admission to these institutions was arranged for by the town overseers of the poor.

In the case of applications for home relief the procedure followed was for a visitor or "examining agent" as they were sometimes called, to investigate the case and report his findings to the county agent who either approved or rejected the request. All doubtful cases were referred to the Committee on City Relations and City Relief for decision.¹ Unfortunately there is very little evidence as to the nature of these investigations or to the extent to which the Committee participated in the relief decisions. That the investigations were in most cases rigorous enough may be assumed from the tenor of the annual reports of some of the county agents in which great stress is laid on the number of applications which had been rejected. A further clue is to be found in the periodic "purging" of the relief rolls at which time all persons receiving home relief were required to make affidavit of their destitution.²

In the event that relief was granted, the successful applicant called at the office once a month with a marked basket to receive his allowance of food.

Nature of Public Home Relief

Through the years there was but little change in what the poor carried away from the county agent's office. Although there was some slight variation, the basic "ration" consisted of a

other large additions were made to the city, the small suburban city of Lake View to the north and the town of Jefferson towards the northwest; however no branch offices were opened to accommodate these outlying parts of the community.

¹Ibid., 1887-88, p. 203.

²Annual Report of the Cook County Agent, 1874, p. 24. Between 1877 and 1901 there were no annual reports published. Quarterly, monthly and even weekly statistical reports were more or less regularly included in the Proceedings. The value of these statements is limited by the fact that they were not comparable from one year to another.

twenty-five pound sack of flour, five pounds of corn beef, five pounds of beans, three of rice, five of oatmeal, one-half of coffee and tea and a cake of hard soap.¹ The addition of the modest amount of tea and coffee to the ration in 1889 was apparently regarded as a sign of an enlightened attitude in the care of the poor, because it was remarked upon in the annual address of the president of the board.²

During this period there was never, as far as could be discovered, any definite policy as to how this ration was to be related to the requirements of the individual family. At one time it was said that "worthy families" were to receive a double amount,³ while a little later the statement was made that large families were to receive two rations with no explanation of what "large" meant when translated into numbers of adults and children.⁴ It is clear that reliance was placed on invisible sources of relief since there was no provision made for milk, fats, fresh vegetables; and the special dietary needs of children, even to the limited extent that they were recognized at this time, were completely overlooked.

Further evidence of this faith in invisible sources of relief is to be found in the fact that clothing and shoes were not regular issues until 1890. During the winter months a half ton of soft coal was delivered once a month.

From time to time orders for a small amount of fresh meat were given. These orders were honored at butchers with whom the county had an annual contract, and there is convincing evidence that dishonesty was frequently practiced in filling the orders. Charges were made in 1874 by one of the newspaper editors that these orders were regularly being discounted so that a dollar order bought only sixty cents worth of meat. Instances were cited where "county" customers were cheated and humiliated by the butchers holding county contracts, and it was further asserted that the meat furnished was of very poor quality.⁵ Although these

¹C. G. Truesdell, "Public and Private Relief in Chicago" in the Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1895, p. 66.

²Proceedings, 1889-90, p. 842.

³Ibid., p. 3.

⁴Truesdell, op. cit., p. 67.

⁵Chicago Times, January 13, 1874.

charges in the press were probably colored by partisan considerations, the fact that they were continued over a period of months during which time the majority of the commissioners refused to accede to the demands made by some of the members for an investigation suggests connivance. Even more convincing is the fact that a few years later some of these same contractors were found by the grand jury to be defrauding the county through their contracts with the hospital and poorhouse.

There was a complete change in the method of providing non-institutional medical relief during this period. It will be recalled that earlier there had been a staff of county physicians who attended the sick poor in their homes upon order of the county agent. From 1873 on, and until nearly the end of the period, only one county physician was appointed and he was responsible solely for commitments to the insane asylum and attendance on prisoners confined in the county jail. To take the place of this staff of physicians, contracts were made with private dispensaries who for a flat sum agreed to take care of all the sick poor in certain specified divisions of the city. The Central Free Dispensary covered the West Division, while the North Star Dispensary served the North Division.¹ A little later an annual appropriation of \$600 was made to the German-American Dispensary to care for the large German colony on the Northwest Side and still later the South Side Dispensary was granted the same amount.² The details of these arrangements were never described any more than that the contracts stipulated that medicine and attendance were to be furnished "under the direction of the county agent." In 1889, county physicians were again appointed for the North and South Divisions of the city, although for a few years thereafter the Central Free Dispensary and the College of Physicians and Surgeons continued to care for the sick on the West Side.³

Another service which the county provided for its destitute citizens was burial. These burials were contracted for at a cost which, incredible as it may seem, ranged from something under

¹Proceedings, 1874-75, p. 142. The Central Free Dispensary received \$1,000 a year and the North Star \$500. Contracts for this same amount were renewed for a number of years.

²Ibid., 1886, p. 119. ³Ibid., 1888, pp. 329-30.

one dollar to a dollar and a quarter per subject. Interment was, of course, in a potter's field and the burials were described as "tardy and cruel." Julia Lathrop who knew what a decent funeral with proper religious services meant to the poor said, "It is hard to go to the infirmary, hard to get relief from the county, but it is esteemed hardest of all to be buried by the county."¹ This abhorrence of a pauper burial was such that of the 607 inmates who died at Dunning in 1893, friends provided funerals for 251 of them.

Transient Relief

The issuance of transportation orders continued as one of the important functions of the county agent, although in general this item accounted for a smaller proportion of the annual relief costs than during the early period when there were hundreds of families passing through the city on their way west. Both the procedure for granting transportation and the policy governing its use were subject to frequent change, and the assertion was made that friends and relatives of the commissioner's traveled widely at county expense.²

Until 1874, transportation orders or "passes" as they were called were issued by the county agent at his own discretion. In that year a resolution was passed, with no accompanying explanation, to the effect that no more such orders were to be given without the approval of a majority of the Committee on Public Charity.³ Three years later charges were made by a member of the board that passes were being issued to friends of the members of this committee for private journeys and a resolution submitted and adopted requiring the county agent to submit a list of all such orders issued for the preceding six months, showing on whose authority each pass had been issued.⁴ This list was duly presented with the explanation that it was not "tenable" to show the names of the persons recommending their issuance, but assuring

¹Lathrop, op. cit., p. 159.

²Proceedings, 1877, p. 186; 1883, p. 364.

³Ibid., March Session, 1874, p. 62.

⁴Ibid., 1877, p. 186.

the board that none had been issued on account of "favoritism."¹ Whether or not this was the case, the number of transportation orders dropped by more than half for the next few years. During the time when the "ring" was in control the number of these passes again reached a new high, 962 1/2 being given in 1886, a number which dropped to 190 1/2 in 1888 after the reform administration came in.

After 1890, every request for a transportation order had to be voted upon by the entire board. That fifteen men who were responsible for the governing of a county which then numbered over a million inhabitants and required an annual budget of well over a million dollars should take time to debate the merits of these hundreds of requests for transportation is significant of the administrative economy which was frequently practiced.

Beginning in 1891, there was a great influx of workers looking for jobs in connection with the building of the World's Fair, for the newspapers had been painting Chicago as a sort of El Dorado where there were opportunities for all. Many of those who arrived became stranded and the county agent was deluged with requests for transportation.

As to the policy pursued in providing transportation, the only two statements regarding this are completely contradictory. At one time the order was given that "transportation shall be furnished to those who would otherwise become permanent charges upon the County" with nothing said as to how such a ruling might conflict with the settlement provisions of the poor law.² On another occasion the county agent was directed to "furnish transportation only in such cases as the law provides" and further to "furnish no transportation with a view of escaping the support of any persons legally entitled to support by Cook County."³ It was not until nearly the end of the period that the county agent was required to determine before providing transportation whether relatives or friends in the town to which the person was being sent were willing and able to support them.⁴ There is no evidence that verification of legal residence and authorization for return were ever secured from the public authorities of the town of destination;

¹Ibid., p. 205.

²Ibid., 1886, p. 544.

³Ibid., 1887, p. 203.

⁴Ibid., 1888, p. 473.

however the litigation which might be anticipated from such a policy is noticeable by its absence. It is remarkable that no settlement case involving Cook County is to be found during the entire period.¹ The depression that followed the closing of the World's Fair left Chicago with a serious transient problem and in later years when West Madison Street became known nation-wide as a great labor pool, both the city and county authorities were forced to make special provision for this mobile group.

Renewed Attempts to Abolish
"Outdoor Relief"

In all of the discussion which occurred during this time about the evils of "outdoor relief" and the desirability of doing away with it there can be distinguished two basic assumptions. The first is that a large proportion of those who were receiving it were able-bodied, employable men and the second that these men could find work if they really wanted to work. In the face of widespread depression such as that of 1873, it was obviously impossible to hold to this second assumption and relief was given to the unemployed without much question. However in normal times the unemployed person was likely to be regarded as suspect and any relief granted him was generally thought to have a "pauperizing" influence and to encourage him in his idleness. Even at the present time remnants of this attitude are not impossible to find, although they are becoming increasingly rare as a result of recent depression experience and wider recognition of the complexities of the problem.

One of the purest examples of this sort of fatalistic reasoning is to be found in the report of a newly appointed county agent:

. . . . Where a family receives aid from the County one month this winter, it is morally certain that they will have it three months next winter, and, if possible, four the winter following. Now, why is this? I assert, without the fear of successful contradiction, that it is the fault of our system

¹The 1874 revision of the poor law had not altered the thirty day residence requirement of the 1841 law; however in 1875 this was raised to six months (Public Laws of Illinois, 1875, p. 90) and in 1889 a one year requirement was established (ibid., 1889, p. 217).

of out-door relief.

There seems to be nothing extraordinary in the fact that a man with a large family, during dull times and a severe winter, should be necessitated to call on the County for a month's relief; but it certainly is a little strange that, having that month's relief, that man, and even his children, should never aspire to anything higher than to live and die a pauper. Yet, if any person doubts that such is the fact, if they come with me and examine the records in the County Agent's office, I feel confident that they will be convinced that the one thing above all others for which our system of out-door relief is remarkable, is its facility for propagating pauperism.

This extract which concludes with the recommendation that a work-house be established as a means of discouraging "impostors in their raids upon public charities" is a typical statement of one whose faith in deterrent methods in the administration of relief is unshaken by the knowledge that these expedients have been tried and failed many times before.

There are no records which would make it possible to determine from year to year just what proportion of the county agent's budget actually went for the relief of able-bodied unemployed. This was a time when the social study as a tool of administration was unknown, but it is certain that when the decision was reached to limit or abolish "outdoor relief" the commissioners did not know either for how many able-bodied unemployed they were providing or enough about the state of the labor market to decide whether or not these men could have work if they wanted to work. They were acting rather on the Malthusian "hunch" that if they did away with public relief, the destitute person would be driven to greater exertion and forced to support himself.

In March, 1874, the following resolution was adopted: "That from and after the 1st day of July, 1874, no person who is able bodied and physically and mentally able to earn a living, shall be supported by, or receive aid from the County, and that alms from the County shall be confined to aged, indigent persons, indigent widows and orphans, old, decrepit persons, and cripples, and such persons as are physically and mentally unable to earn a living, and such extreme cases as may be specially ordered by this Board, or a majority of the Committee on Public Charities

¹Annual Report of the Cook County Agent, 1876, pp. 22-24.

in writing."¹ This, then, was an announcement that in the future unemployment would not be considered a satisfactory reason for asking for relief. This policy was nominally in effect until January, 1878, and although there is no way of telling how rigorously this ruling was interpreted, the saving in relief expenditures was not impressive as may be seen from Table 9. The conclusion therefore seems warranted that the number of cases of unemployment, uncomplicated by other causes which would bring them under the last clause of the resolution, was not large.

TABLE 9
EXPENDITURES OF THE COOK COUNTY AGENT
1873-1877*

Year	Total Cost	Relief	Administration
1873-74....	\$185,995.14	\$169,843.17	\$16,151.97
1874-76....	166,693.18	150,162.13	16,531.00
1875-76....	186,341.01	168,504.15	17,836.86
1876-77....	206,647.57	188,699.57	17,948.00

*Data taken from "Report of Finance Committee," Proceedings, 1888-89, p. 676.

As has been noted before, when the commissioners were required to examine these requests, case by case, it became impossible to enforce the regulation, and the number of exceptions and special cases finally persuaded them to abandon it as a policy. In the present instance the board found it necessary to suspend the regulation for two months in 1878 due to the fact that there were "a great many able-bodied men . . . without means of earning a living caused by the present depressed times." It is significant that it was never resumed during the term of office of that board. That is, this particular group of men had, by this experience, learned something about unemployment relief. However later, with a new county agent and a complete change in the personnel of the board, the experiment had to be made all over again in order that another group of public officials could

¹Proceedings, March Session, 1874, p. 63.

learn the same thing.

One of the first moves of the reformed board which came into office after the "boodle" trials of 1887 was to close the county agent's office and discontinue all home relief.¹ According to the resolution this policy was to be in effect from July 15th to December 1st, 1887. In his inaugural address, the new president of the board expressed his regret that this could not be made permanent, but recognized that "The Supreme Court has decided that the County cannot wholly escape the liability imposed by the statute of providing temporary relief."² However before the expiration of the stipulated time, it was discovered that this policy, which the president would have made permanent, was not entirely satisfactory. In November the Committee on Public Service reported that:

It seems desirable and is probably good policy to administer relief in families where such families would otherwise be dissolved, and one or more of them become inmates of our Poor House and thus permanent charges upon the County. There are unquestionably many instances where this would be the alternative, and it is desirable not only from an economic but from a moral standpoint as well, that such families should be kept intact and that necessary partial relief be furnished them in their homes, always bearing in mind that the statutes provide for the temporary relief only.³

This portion of the report was adopted and home relief resumed, however another section of the report recommending that the services of the Charity Organization Society be used to investigate cases, and that a monthly appropriation of \$150 be made for this purpose was not adopted.

It should be said here that on this occasion the board was encouraged in its decision to abolish "outdoor relief" by the leaders of the Charity Organization Society who thought that they knew how to administer home relief without pauperizing the recipients.

Before discussing the influence of the private societies on the public agency, mention should be made of one other attempt

¹Ibid., 1886-87, p. 346.

²Ibid., p. 392. It was impossible to identify the decision to which reference is made here.

³Ibid., p. 544.

to abolish this form of relief. This took the form of the appointment of a committee in 1889 to discuss with the county attorney and the legislature at Springfield whether "the system of so-called Out-Door Relief cannot be changed from County to Township support in the county towns of this County, and discontinued in the city of Chicago, as is said has been done in other large cities with satisfactory results."¹ A report of this committee's activities was never published, but that it was unsuccessful may be judged from the fact that the section of the Illinois poor law dealing with temporary relief outside the poorhouse was never amended to permit Chicago to follow the example of the eastern cities. It is unfortunate that there is no evidence as to who these early defenders of the principle of public responsibility were or why it seemed important to them that it be protected.

The Relationships between the Chicago Relief
and Aid Society and the County Agent

Considerable emphasis has been placed on the fact that the principle of public responsibility for the care of the destitute survived in Chicago despite the extra-legal efforts of the board to suspend its effect in the field of non-institutional relief. In view of the inadequacy of the relief that was granted and the political maneuvering and dishonesty which frequently characterized its administration, the question may be asked whether it might not have been better to have turned responsibility for relief over to the private societies as some of those who were interested in the poor urged be done. This is an interesting but an extremely difficult question to answer due to the complexity of the issues and the incomplete evidence on which it is often necessary to base conclusions. What will be undertaken here is an appraisal of the work of one of these agencies and some discussion of its relationships with the public authority. The selection of the Relief and Aid Society is inevitable since it was by all odds the most important, and during the years under review had a vested interest in many of the other private institutions and agencies in the city.

The history of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society before

¹Ibid., 1888, p. 119.

1871 follows very closely that of similar organizations which sprang up in many of the eastern cities during the first half of the nineteenth century.¹ The inability of the old neighborhood methods to cope with the problems of destitution which accompanied the growth of the cities was, in almost every case, their *raison d'etre* and the Chicago society was no exception.²

Reference has already been made to its work in relieving the sufferers of the great fire of 1871 and to the fact that it emerged from this disaster as the most influential social agency of the city. In reviewing its work for the year following the fire, the superintendent reported that "The county authorities were unable [*sic*] to do but little during the past year toward relieving such cases as properly came under their purview, and this Society cheerfully assumed the charge of all the poor."³ While it is true that the private society cared for the bulk of all relief in the months immediately following the fire which occurred on October 9, 1871, by March, 1872, they had returned many

¹The first of these was the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor which was founded in 1843; at about the same time Brooklyn established its Association, with Baltimore following in 1849. Boston called its first society of this kind, founded in 1851, the Provident Association. The principles emphasized by Robert M. Hartley, the founder of the New York Association, were generally adopted by the others. These were: "Relief ought to be based upon an inquiry into the needs of the recipient. A district system equipped with local workers, including volunteers, offers the best method of relief distribution. Certain conditions, such as temperance, school attendance and vocational training, should be insisted upon. Beggars and the wilfully dependent should be deterred by making their lot less comfortable than that of able-bodied workers. Co-operation with other charities is essential" (Porter R. Lee, "Three Score Years and Ten," an editorial, *The Survey*, XXI [1913], 225, cited in Frank D. Watson, *The Charity Organization Movement in the United States* [New York, 1922]).

²In Feder, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-25, reference is made to the widespread belief that the Chicago Relief and Aid Society was founded in 1857 due to increased demands for relief made during the depression of that year. The author's own researches in the files of early Chicago newspapers confirm her statement that the society existed without formal charter as early as 1851 and that the decision to effect a more permanent organization was made some months before the depression was felt in Chicago.

³Chicago Relief and Aid Society, *Fifteenth Annual Report*, p. 19.

of these cases to the county agent. Early in that month the secretary notified the board of commissioners that he had some 800 families to be transferred--families who were properly the charge of the county.¹ At this time the finances of the county were in bad shape and the commissioners, knowing that the Relief and Aid Society still had a balance of well over a million dollars remaining in the "fire" fund, appointed a committee "to advise with the City Authorities and the Relief and Aid Society, as to the proper manner of disposing of the funds subscribed by a liberal world to the poor of Chicago."² The private agency refused to consider having this money used for regular relief purposes and went ahead with its plan of returning families to the county agent. A bitter resolution was then adopted by the commissioners denouncing the society and criticizing the officers for using this fund to subsidize the future needs of other private institutions and agencies when there was so much present suffering among the poor.³ Despite this criticism and the efforts

¹Proceedings, March Session, 1872, p. 4. ²Ibid., p. 5.

³Ibid., pp. 14-15. During the year 1872 the Relief and Aid Society made the following lump sum appropriations:

Chicago Nursery and Half Orphan Asylum	\$25,000
St. Joseph's Hospital	30,000
St. Luke's Hospital	28,000
Chicago Protestant Orphan Asylum	10,000
Mercy Hospital	40,000
House of the Good Shepherd.	16,500
Scammon Hospital	15,000
Alexian Brothers' Hospital	18,000
St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum	30,000
Newsboys' and Bootblacks' Home	12,000
Home of the Friendless	30,400
Deaconess' Hospital	25,000
Chicago Foundlings' Home	10,000
Eye and Ear Infirmary	25,000
Women's and Children's Hospital	25,000
Uhlich Orphan Asylum	20,000
Western Seaman's Friend Society	8,000
Western Seaman's Bethel	15,000
Total	\$328,900

These annual appropriations were continued for a number of years; by 1876, the sum of \$617,810 had been distributed to these organizations. Some of these grants were used for building, while others were placed in endowment funds. In almost every case a contract was entered into with the Relief and Aid Society, guaranteeing it the right to so many beds (Eighteenth Annual Report, pp. 18-19).

of the city authorities, who joined with the county in demanding that this money be used for immediate, direct relief, the society did not retreat from its former position. Another attempt was made by the county board in 1873 to force the society to disgorge some of this surplus by threatening to investigate the uses to which it was being put; however nothing ever came of this and the policy of subsidies continued.¹ When the relief rolls began to rise sharply during the winter of 1873 from the effects of a nation-wide depression, this fund again became a matter of contention between the public and private authorities, and this time the unemployed themselves joined in the controversy.

Unemployment Relief in Time of Depression

A brief summary of the conditions leading to the panic of 1873 and the depression years which followed is to be found in the report of the first United States Commissioner of Labor which was written some years later:

There had been a period of excessive speculation, especially in railroads and real estate; large failures following that of Jay Cooke, inflation of currency, high protective tariff, large immigration, and the unnatural stimulus given to industry by the [Civil] War, brought the monetary affairs of the country to a crisis, resulting in general distrust, fall of prices, apprehension, and all the train of evils which follow such crises. The result was an industrial depression . . . far more severe than any that preceded it.²

The failure of the banking house of Jay Cooke and Company in Philadelphia occurred in September; however it was not until the latter part of December that Chicago's unemployment problem became acute. Frequent reference was made to disturbed business conditions in the press all during the fall, and some note had been taken of the increasing number of unemployed, but no special provision had been made by either the public or private relief

¹Proceedings, 1873, p. 7. At a later date the charge was made that the society made large loans to some of its directors from this fund at interest rates far below the prevailing rates (Alexander Johnson, Adventures in Social Welfare [Fort Wayne, 1923], p. 60).

²U. S. Commissioner of Labor, First Annual Report: Industrial Depressions (March, 1886), pp. 60-61. Cited in Feder, op. cit., p. 37.

agencies. Four days before Christmas the unemployed held their first meeting at the Vorwaert's Turner Hall on West 12th Street and it was estimated that between five and seven thousand people attended. The meeting was addressed in German, Swedish, Polish, French and English. The speech made by the German representative, which was typical of the others, ended with the statement that "The time had arrived when measures against the compact mass of bourgeois were in order, and therefore working men must be united into one good society, and sure as there was a God in heaven, something would be accomplished."¹ At the conclusion of the meeting a platform was adopted calling on the city council to provide work at the rate of eight hours a day, with "sufficient" wages and advances either in money or provisions for those to whom no immediate employment could be given, this relief to be distributed and supervised by a committee chosen by the working men. The next day the leading newspaper said that the report of the meeting had come "upon the American portion of the population of Chicago like lightning from a clear sky" and that there had been nothing to prepare the community for demands of this sort.² The Socieller-Politischer Arbeits Verein, a so-called "Anarchist" group, which had sponsored the meeting, along with the Carpenters' and Workingmen's Unions immediately opened two offices to receive applications for employment and relief, and were reported to have registered nearly 6,000 men even before their demands had been presented to the special committee of the city council that had been appointed.

When the two committees met, there was prompt agreement that the surplus of the Relief and Aid Society should be tapped to meet the emergency, and it was proposed that between fifty and a hundred thousand dollars of this money be demanded for work relief and distribution by the aldermen. The chairman of the workingmen's committee said, "If they refuse to give it up, then the working men would know who to hold responsible for their sorrows and suffering--they would know whether the money was or was not held for the benefit of tottering banks and shaky real estate speculators or whether it was held for the benefit of the people

¹Chicago Tribune, December 22, 1873.

²Ibid., December 23, 1873.

of Chicago."¹ A joint committee was chosen to call upon the Relief and Aid officials; however the superintendent postponed this meeting until after Christmas. In the interim sweeping threats were made at the workers' headquarters that the society's building would be demolished and the grain elevators attacked if their demands were not acceded to.²

At a meeting, the spokesman for the society, the Reverend C. G. Truesdell who was also its superintendent, offered to produce the entire balance of \$700,000 in cash to be counted by the joint committee in answer to their charge that this money had been diverted to the personal use of members of his board. He refused to turn over any part of it to the city council for work relief, saying that it was a sacred trust and that the society alone must be responsible for its expenditure; however he did offer on behalf of his board to extend the work of the society in any way suggested.³

The following day the unemployed marched in a body to the Relief and Aid offices to find out whether the promise of extended relief activities was to be fulfilled. Although there was no rioting, so many crowded into the offices that it was feared the building might collapse. In order to clear the building the announcement was made that all must be vaccinated before they could receive relief, and in the meantime fifty extra visitors were hired by the superintendent.⁴ These visitors reported 600 visits during their first day and found about 40 per cent "deserving" relief. As a further means of dispersing the crowds which continued to gather ". . . [the superintendent] through the press, and by placards in different languages was [directed] to give notice that . . . applications received by letter can receive more prompt attention than those made in person, and all who can do so are requested to apply through the post with the

¹Ibid., December 24, 1873.

²Ibid., December 25 and 26, 1873.

³Ibid., December 27, 1873. In another account of this meeting it was said that Truesdell pacified the aroused labor contingent by passing out cigars and appointing some of them visitors for a single week (Johnson, op. cit., pp. 61-62).

⁴Chicago Tribune, December 28 and 30, 1873.

recommendation of some well known citizen. Persons receiving aid from the county and single able-bodied men are not aided by this society."¹

By the end of the year the society's surplus of a little over \$700,000 had been reduced by more than 50 per cent, and of the 9,710 families to whom relief was given, about half were listed as fire victims.²

During 1875, there was complaint of the society's method of administering relief which resulted in an investigation by a committee of the city council. This committee found "no evidence of partiality or prejudice on account of nationality or religion" (which had been the basis of some of the charges) and expressed itself as convinced that "the whole business had been faithfully and wisely administered."³ Despite the fact that it had emerged from this public investigation absolved of all the charges that had been made against it, the directors decided that the retention of the still substantial balance of "fire" money in the treasury would continue to be subject to attack and so determined to transfer the money to the general fund where it would arouse "no more public criticism than is always connected with the custody of large sums of money." This was done and by 1885 this surplus which had involved the society in so many difficulties had been entirely spent and subscriptions were again asked for.

From the newspaper accounts one might conclude that the Relief and Aid had born the full brunt of unemployment relief during this depression. Actually this was not the case, for although the society spent over \$300,000 during 1874, it has been already noted that about half of the recipients were fire victims. During the same period the expenses of the county agent's office were approximately \$186,000; and so it may be seen that the public agency carried a substantial share of the burden.

Not only in times of depression, but throughout this period, whether it be in the newspapers, the proceedings of the

¹Chicago Relief and Aid Society, "Minutes of the Board of Directors, January 2, 1874," cited in Feder, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

²Seventeenth Annual Report, 1874, pp. 10 and 24.

³Eighteenth Annual Report, 1875, p. 6.

National Conference on Charities and Corrections or in the reports of the society itself, there is this same disposition to think of the private society as doing the really important work in the field of home relief. For this reason it is interesting to compare the amounts spent by the Relief and Aid with that of the county agent as has been done in Table 10. It will be seen that once the Relief and Aid's large balance was spent, it was the county which was providing by far the larger amount of home relief, and this even if very liberal deductions are made for the amounts which were wasted and misappropriated from time to time

TABLE 10

COMPARISON OF AMOUNTS SPENT FOR HOME RELIEF BY THE
COOK COUNTY AGENT AND THE CHICAGO RELIEF AND AID
SOCIETY, 1873-1893^a

Year	County Agent	Relief and Aid Society
1873-74.....	\$169,843	\$259,144 ^b
1874-75.....	150,162	280,506 ^b
1875-76.....	168,504	99,327
1876-77.....	188,699	40,817
1877-78.....	100,901	35,409
1878-79.....	66,074	28,301
1879-80.....	52,485	26,022
1880-81.....	67,480	33,140
1881-82.....	56,350	24,948
1882-83.....	76,927	23,404
1883-84.....	88,807	15,496
1884-85.....	116,035	31,653
1885-86.....	107,800	22,399
1886-87.....	64,066	20,560
1887-88 ^c	23,880	23,920
1889.....	43,112	25,192
1890.....	64,997	19,167
1891.....	82,541	14,379
1892.....	65,601	20,221
1893.....	79,949	31,321

^aData taken from Proceedings and Annual Reports of Relief and Aid Society.

^bThis figure includes administrative costs. Elsewhere it has been possible to separate this item.

^cFiscal year of the county changed from September 1 to January 1. Throughout, the fiscal year of the Relief and Aid Society ends on October 31.

TABLE 11

TOTAL AMOUNTS SPENT FOR HOME RELIEF BY COOK COUNTY AGENT
AND CHICAGO RELIEF AND AID SOCIETY WITH PERCENTAGE
SPENT BY EACH AGENCY, 1873-1893

Year	Total	County Agent	Relief and Aid Society
1873-74.....	\$428,987	42.6	57.4
1874-75.....	430,668	34.8	65.2
1875-76.....	267,831	62.9	37.1
1876-77.....	229,517	82.2	17.8
1877-78.....	136,310	74.0	26.0
1878-79.....	94,376	70.0	30.0
1879-80.....	78,507	66.9	33.1
1880-81.....	100,621	67.1	32.9
1881-82.....	81,299	69.3	30.7
1882-83.....	105,332	73.0	27.0
1883-84.....	104,304	85.1	14.9
1884-85.....	147,598	78.6	21.4
1885-86.....	130,199	82.7	17.3
1886-87.....	84,627	75.7	24.3
1887-88.....	47,800	49.9	50.1
1889.....	68,304	63.1	36.9
1890.....	84,165	77.2	22.8
1891.....	96,920	85.1	14.9
1892.....	85,823	76.4	23.6
1893.....	111,271	71.8	28.2
Average.....		72.8	27.2

by the county officials. This is still more strikingly shown in Table 11, where these amounts are expressed as percentages. The question then arises whether the prestige enjoyed by the private society was perhaps due to a more enlightened attitude toward the destitute and more constructive methods of giving relief.

Policies and Methods of the
Relief and Aid Society

It should be said at the start that it is hard to examine these policies and methods without being too greatly influenced in one's judgment by present-day practice. That is, of course, an unfair standard of comparison. Also the complacency of the private agency makes it tempting to be overcritical. While conscious of both of these pitfalls, the writer does not pretend completely to have avoided either of them.

Except for the years immediately following the fire, the Relief and Aid distributed the bulk of its relief in cash--fuel, blankets and shoes being the only usual items of commodity relief. This was undoubtedly preferable to the "rations" of the county agent and the only question is how adequate were these cash grants. While the society still had its large surplus it was criticized for being overgenerous and indiscriminate in its relief giving, particularly to anyone who had suffered by the fire; however after this money was spent, it was said that the agency settled down to a system of "niggardly dole-relief."¹ There was never anything during these years which might be described as a budget, and the only statement of a relief policy made by the society itself was that it had "adopted and adhered to the plan of giving relief only in such cases as were most urgent and in sums barely sufficient for present needs."²

One writer, who made a study of the work of the society, compared the amounts spent for relief with the numbers served over a ten-year period (1886-1896), and came to the conclusion that the individual grants were extremely small.³ In the annual reports great stress was always laid on the fact that the majority of the cases received relief but once. For example, in 1874 out of 9,719 cases, 6,632 were assisted only once; 1,951 received aid twice; 618 three times and only 518 were helped four or more times.⁴ It is difficult to believe here that in over two-thirds of the cases the needs of the families were so temporary that relief on only one occasion was sufficient to meet them. What appears more likely is that either relief was not needed in the first place, or that much more should have been given. The sample case stories which appeared in the annual reports are evidence that the latter must frequently have been true. Cases involving widows with small children, chronic illness, families where the wage earner had been permanently incapacitated, and all of those situations which we now recognize as requiring long time

¹Johnson, op. cit., p. 61.

²Twenty-third Annual Report, 1879, p. 4.

³Coonley, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

⁴Seventeenth Annual Report, 1874, p. 8.

care are closed with the notation "Family aided but once."

Special attention should be called to the society's attitude towards child labor and education as it affected its relief policy. In the annual report for 1890 the superintendent says:

We sometimes find a family asking relief where there are children old enough to contribute their earnings to the common support. But the parents say: these children want an education, and must be kept in school. Except in extraordinary circumstances, we consider ourselves justified in refusing aid to such families.¹

The only comment that need be made here is that other more progressive groups had already appreciated the evils of child labor and succeeded in having the first Illinois child labor law passed the following year.²

At one of the early sessions of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, the president of the board of the Relief and Aid Society read a paper in which he said that the books of that agency constituted a "record of the meritorious poor of the city of Chicago" and emphasized the fact that "such as are the proper subjects for the poor house or the action of the county officers" were never included in its work."³ That is, the destitute were sorted into two groups to which the terms "worthy" and "unworthy" were commonly applied; and it was the former in which the private society was interested. Other statements of this policy are to be found in the society's annual reports. In 1888, the superintendent in speaking of Chicago's poor said:

. . . . we have comparatively few families of the lowest grade of natural paupers. Of course we have some as lazy, improvident and vicious as can be found anywhere, but they can be easily identified and resisted. The county authorities

¹Thirty-third Annual Report, p. 7.

²Laws of Illinois, 1891, p. 87. At least as early as 1883, union labor in Chicago favored a law prohibiting the employment of children under eighteen in factories and workshops (Earl R. Beckner, A History of Labor Legislation in Illinois [Chicago, 1929], p. 153)

³E. B. McCagg, "The Charities of Chicago," Sixth Annual Conference of Charities and Corrections (1879), Proceedings, pp. 147-48.

must deal with them.¹

And in another report: "The County Agent is supposed to look after and care for the pauper population proper, which embraces the permanently disabled, the improvident and intemperate, those who are never self supporting or likely to become so--the strangers shipped to us by other cities--the vagrant and the criminal."² In thus electing to limit their services to what might be called the "aristocracy of destitution," the Relief and Aid Society was merely adopting the policies of the eastern Associations for Improving the Condition of the Poor who saw nothing strange in this sharp division of the field, and who apparently never questioned their ability to discriminate between the "worthy" and the "un-worthy."

If one can judge by the published rules of the organization, it was thought impossible for a person to survive the experience of receiving public relief without suffering permanent demoralization. The society's visitors were warned that "all cases now on county books, or who ever have been" (italics the writer's) were to be cared for by the county.³

No one will want to question the right of this society or any other private agency to restrict its work to those cases which hold the greatest promise of profiting by their services; however it is not easy to justify this defeatist attitude toward the public agency. While deploring the work of the county agent, the society smugly expressed the opinion that it "did not assume the right to interfere with nor was it responsible for the administration of public charity." It is undoubtedly true that there were times when the county commissioners would not have welcomed any suggestions from the Relief and Aid; however when the re-formed board came into office in 1886, knowing that home relief like every other sort of county provision for the destitute had been poorly administered, the society refused their request for

¹Thirty-first Annual Report, p. 7.

²Thirty-second Annual Report, p. 8.

³"Rules for Visitors," p. 32 in Thirty-fourth Annual Report.

help in improving it.¹

Chicago was not the only city where the private societies wanted to have nothing to do with public relief, nor was this attitude peculiar to the times. Although now definitely on the wane, it survived well into the present century and was strikingly manifest in the early controversy over mothers' pensions, when some of the eminent social workers of the day, whose sincere interest in the destitute cannot be questioned, fought these pensions because they were perfectly certain that no form of public relief could be well administered.

In the case of the Relief and Aid Society there was not only this mistrust of public relief, but also a disposition to ignore or even block the efforts of other private organizations in the field.² When the first Charity Organization Society was established in Chicago in 1886, the superintendent of the Relief and Aid announced publicly that its work was "needless duplication" of services already being rendered by the society he represented, and refused to have anything to do with the new venture.³ The following year this first Charity Organization Society was "benevolently assimilated" by the Relief and Aid with the explanation that it was "unnecessary to keep up two organizations" since the work of the two societies was "so nearly identical."⁴ As a matter of fact this was far from being the case, for the principle of co-operation with other agencies which was basic in the Charity Organization Society movement did not find expression in the work of the Relief and Aid Society at this time. Several

¹A somewhat similar request was refused in 1880 when there had been criticism of the county agent's office (Proceedings, 1879-80, p. 232)

²Alexander Johnson, whose statement must be read with the knowledge that he had had personal differences with the society, said, "The various church aid societies, national organizations, etc. could get no assistance not even any advice from the Relief and Aid. . . . Its officers and directors, feeling themselves because of their funded wealth independent of public favor, were oblivious of any need to conciliate or co-operate with other agencies" (op. cit., p. 63).

³Chicago Tribune, February 1, 1886; Watson, op. cit., p. 224.

⁴Thirty-first Annual Report, p. 4.

years later when a second attempt was made to organize a Charity Organization Society by making permanent the Central Relief Association, a temporary organization formed to administer unemployment relief during the depression which followed the World's Fair in 1893, the older society again opposed the move on the ground that it was already doing all that was necessary.¹

Summary

In all of this there are two or three points which seem especially important. The first is that through the years it was the public authority which was providing by far the larger part of the relief in the homes of the Chicago poor; and while this relief was usually inadequate, judged by present standards, the evidence as to the work of the private agency does not warrant the conclusion that its assistance was at all times either more wisely or generously given. Also while there can be no questioning of the fact that public "outdoor" relief was poorly and sometimes dishonestly administered, those who were regarded as the community's authorities in the field of social welfare were content to hold themselves aloof and disclaim all responsibility, rather than to offer the leadership which might have led to improvement. Finally, and most important, despite the suggestions which were made to abolish all public home relief, and one or two successful extra-legal attempts to suspend it for brief periods, the principal of public responsibility as laid down in the Illinois poor law remained intact.

¹Jane Addams gives an amusing account of her own annoyance with the Relief and Aid Society for its resistance on this occasion: "At one particular meeting we [Julia Lathrop who after the meeting jokingly rebuked Miss Addams for giving vent to her irritation in public] felt our plans for what we considered a better type of organization estopped as it were by the complacency of the upholders of the existing Relief and Aid Society which had been active ever since the administration of the Chicago Fire Fund in 1871. In a closing speech I had told the story of Boston whose charities were so thoroughly organized that if a three-quarters orphan were discovered today, tomorrow Boston would found a society for the care of three-quarters orphans. I added that if a three-quarters orphan were discovered in Chicago today, that tomorrow the Relief and Aid Society would assert that they had taken excellent care of all the three-quarters orphans ever since the fire" (My Friend Julia Lathrop [New York, 1935], p. 77).

CHAPTER VIII

THE DUNNING INSTITUTIONS

The two county institutions at Dunning, the almshouse and the insane asylum, were for more than half of this second period jointly administered. Until 1885, the warden of the almshouse was also warden of the insane asylum and prior to 1882 the costs of operating the two institutions were lumped together and reported in a single financial statement. Further, during all of this time the Committee on Public Charities¹ had oversight over both institutions. For these reasons it is convenient to join discussion of some of the problems common to both.

Problems of Administrative Organization

In the two decades between 1871 and 1893, it is not the development of improved standards of care for either the destitute or the insane which is remarkable, for these gains were relatively slight. It is rather the new problems of administration which came with the rapid expansion of the institutions and the attempts to solve them which are of particular interest. As may be seen from Table 12, the average population of the almshouse doubled during these years while that of the insane asylum increased about three times. The costs of operation (Table 13) show a corresponding increase. From these two sets of figures it is clear that the Dunning institutions had grown very large and that for their satisfactory operation something more than the former inefficient methods of administration would be required.

Even before 1871, there was ample evidence that the committee form of administration was poorly adapted for the purpose, but it was not until that year that there was any departure from the existing pattern. What was proposed and adopted at this time was the creation of a new department called the Department of

¹After the reforms of 1887 this was a sub-committee of the Committee on Public Service.

TABLE 12

AVERAGE DAILY POPULATION OF THE COOK COUNTY POORHOUSE
AND INSANE ASYLUM, 1873-1893^a

Year	Poorhouse	Insane Asylum
1873-74.....	644	302
1874-75.....	632	345
1875-76.....	823	393
1876-77.....	656	(b)
1877-78.....	(b)	(b)
1878-79.....	651	486
1879-80.....	546	448
1880-81.....	(b)	444
1881-82.....	641	489
1882-83.....	673	522
1883-84.....	802	592
1884-85.....	1,012	567
1885-86.....	1,195	625
1886-87.....	1,000	819
1888.....	1,058	895
1889.....	1,198	1,000
1890.....	1,184	1,071
1891.....	1,383	1,001
1892.....	1,257	825
1893.....	1,264	796

^aData taken from summary report of Comptroller published in Proceedings, 1888, pp. 676-77, and subsequent annual reports of the wardens and physicians of the two institutions.

^bData not available.

Public Charities, and as discussed in the commissioners' chambers the new plan was not unlike the present conception of an appropriate organization for the purpose. The new department which included all of the charitable agencies of the county was headed by an executive officer known as the Superintendent and Medical Director of Public Charities who was paid \$2,400 a year. This was a very substantial salary for the time and may be taken to mean that the commissioners expected him to relieve the board of a considerable amount of responsibility.¹

¹At this time the salaries of the other officers were: Warden of Insane Asylum and Poorhouse, \$1,000; Warden of the County Hospital, \$1,000; Physician at Insane Asylum, \$1,200; County Agent, \$1,200; County Physician, \$1,800.

TABLE 13

COSTS OF OPERATING THE COOK COUNTY POORHOUSE
AND INSANE ASYLUM, 1871-1893^a

Year	Poorhouse	Insane Asylum
1871-72.....	\$ 69,951	\$ (b)
1872-73.....	118,429	(b)
1873-74.....	163,086	(b)
1874-75.....	139,575	(b)
1875-76.....	189,744	(b)
1876-77.....	194,350	(b)
1877-78.....	142,449	(b)
1878-79.....	126,930	(b)
1879-80.....	125,155	(b)
1880-81.....	147,334	(b)
1881-82.....	162,540	(b)
1882-83.....	83,593	149,614
1883-84.....	111,889	153,353
1884-85.....	169,128	205,056
1885-86.....	216,632	240,934
1886-87.....	176,587	226,746
1888.....	108,041	170,302
1889.....	110,181	161,690
1890.....	125,826	176,449
1891.....	138,908	195,715
1892.....	256,430	(b)
1893.....	278,960	(b)

^aData taken from Proceedings.^bIncluded in figure for poorhouse.

In addition to certain duties in connection with the county agent's office the Superintendent was to have "general supervision of the domestic economy, as well as the sanitary and hygienic departments of the public institutions" and was to be "held accountable for the most economical administration of their affairs."¹ He was also given the authority to require statistics and reports from all of the institutions. In short what was proposed was the substitution of an executive officer for the inefficient administrative committee.

The department lasted less than two years and was abol-

¹Proceedings, December Session, 1871, p. 51.

ished in September, 1873, without any word of explanation.¹ Although it is not possible to piece together from the evidence any definite conclusion as to why this first experiment in progressive methods of administration was abandoned, the question of political expediency is strongly suggested. Dr. Ben Miller who was appointed to the position of Superintendent was a well-known Chicago physician who was highly regarded in the community while the warden of the poorhouse and insane asylum, who was later indicted for conspiracy, and several members of the Committee on Public Charities who came into office in 1873 were subsequently proven to be involved in the scheme to defraud the county on purchases of supplies for the charitable institutions. It appears not unlikely that Dr. Miller's removal was in some way connected with these circumstances. During the time that Dr. Miller was in office the participation of the commissioners in the minutiae of administration was noticeably lessened, but with his discharge they again become preoccupied with the domestic detail of the institutions.

A problem of administrative organization which persisted in one form or another during the entire period, and which still exists as one on which there is not universal agreement, was the division of authority between the warden and the medical officer of the institution. Contributing to the complexity of this already difficult problem was always the question of the relationship of the Committee on Public Charities to whichever of these happened for the moment to be in charge. Among the plans which were tried and abandoned was that of having one warden in charge of both institutions with a physician supposedly exercising equal authority in all matters where the treatment of patients was concerned;² at another time the position of warden of the poorhouse was abolished and a physician carrying the title of Medical Superintendent placed in charge with the insane department likewise under the management of a physician.³ When this failed the popular scheme of placing a "business man" in command of both insti-

¹Proceedings, 1873, p. 25. ²Ibid., 1871, pp. 41-42.

³Ibid., 1886-87, pp. 229-32. The failure of this plan was attributed to the fact that too much of the physician's time was required for medical duties and that the administrative aspects of the job were neglected.

tutions was resorted to.¹

The fact that the insane asylum, while occupying its own building, was for more than half of the period not a separate institution entailed further problems in organization. In 1876, the Medical Superintendent said in his annual report:

I must say the system by which the Cook County Insane Asylum is managed is an extremely miserable one; it prevents the physician from managing it as he should, and does not allow a favorable chance to bring about the good results for which it was intended.

The Medical Superintendent cannot have the desired success in the treatment of the insane, while a Warden [of the poorhouse] is empowered to use his judgment as to what nourishment they shall receive. . . . The supplies of food received at the Asylum for the past year have been varied, plentiful, and of very good quality, but the method of preparing it has been disgusting and outrageous, and when at the repeated entreaties of my patients I have called upon the Warden and his cooks to remedy this evil, instead of kindly recognizing my appeal they have returned gross insults and inform me that the physician's duties do not extend into the culinary department.²

At about the same time the State Board of Public Charities complained of the harmful effects of having the warden of the poorhouse in control of the insane department. "The evidence is abundant, even to a casual visitor that the insanity of the insane is lost sight of in the sense of their poverty--they are regarded and treated as beggars, not as persons suffering from disease of the brain. . . ." And a little further on in the same report another disadvantage of the arrangement is stressed: As at present organized, no man living can tell with any certainty, what proportion of the costs of maintaining the institution is chargeable to the asylum and what to the almshouse."³ Note has already been taken of the fact that after 1882 the costs of operating these two institutions were reported upon separately; however this was merely a bookkeeping arrangement and it cannot be said that there was any real separation until after the public investigation of the insane asylum in 1886.⁴

At the root of all of these difficulties was the absence

¹Ibid., 1892-93, p. 3. ²Ibid., 1876, pp. 43-45.

³State Board of Charities, Report, 1878, pp. 228-29.

⁴See below, pp. 143-47.

of any clearly defined lines of authority, or any well developed plan of organization. In outline, this plan for operating an institution which had thousands of inmates was but little different from what it had been when there were under a hundred. The result was that the institutions were "always in a muddle," and as one of the commissioners said, when they went out to Dunning to settle the endless difficulties which arose they "could never find out what it was all about."¹ Concerning this the Board of Public Charities observed:

It will readily be seen, that under this system, the almshouse has no head. The warden is not head, and the superintendent is not head; the real head is the committee, which is five heads. No single mind co-ordinates the parts into one harmonious whole; the county has no assurance that any order which may be given will be obeyed; and in case of failure or neglect, no one is responsible for the result. . . . The committee is besides too far removed from the establishment, to attempt to fulfil the functions which properly devolve upon an executive officer who should at all times be upon the spot to see that his orders are obeyed. The chief executive officer, whoever he may be, should be a single person, clothed with absolute authority and held to absolute responsibility for his acts.²

At the very end of the period the position of General Superintendent of the Dunning Institutions was created in an effort to correct some of these conditions. By the terms of his appointment this new officer was seemingly invested with all the authority necessary to effect improvement in the administration of the two institutions. Much was made of the fact that a "business man" had been selected to fill this post, and the president prophesied that the board's troubles would now be over; however this man, George S. Sawyer, resigned at the end of one year because he felt himself completely defeated by the patronage system.³

¹State Commissioners of Public Charities, Special Report of an Investigation of the Management of the Cook County Hospital for the Insane (Springfield, 1886), p. 5.

²Illinois Board of Public Charities, Report, 1878, p. 228.

³Proceedings, 1892, p. 88.

Personnel Problems and the
Effect of Patronage

There were five principal officers appointed annually for the Dunning institutions. These were the medical superintendent, the warden, the matron, the engineer and the storekeeper. Usually the Committee on Public Charities nominated candidates for these positions and then submitted their selections to the board for a vote. Prior to 1886, when the commissioners served three-year terms, these officers were often reappointed from year to year; however after that time this was rarely the case. No one of these five had authority over the other, nor were their mutual relations and obligations ever clearly set forth in the printed rules for the government of the institutions. The opportunities for misunderstanding and friction under such a system are obvious, and the standard of service was directly affected by the controversies which arose.¹

Through the years the number of subordinate positions was greatly increased. At the end of the period there were approximately 300 persons employed at the two institutions. According to the regulations of the board the medical superintendent was authorized to "employ and discharge all persons having immediate charge and care of inmates" while the warden was allowed to appoint and discharge all other employees required at the institution.² In actual practice all of the positions were scheduled with the salaries attached and each commissioner was allotted a share of the two or three hundred jobs to award as patronage.³

Since the warden and medical superintendent were unable to discharge any of the employees, insubordination was common. The disastrous effects on the inmates of such a personnel policy were strikingly shown at the time of the public investigation of the insane asylum in 1886. On one occasion the medical superintendent was unable to attend any of the patients for several days

¹The incident described above of disagreement between the warden and the medical superintendent over the preparation of food for insane patients is typical of many others.

²Proceedings, December Session, 1871, pp. 41-42; 1887, p.

³Lathrop, op. cit., p. 161.

as a result of being beaten up by the night watchman; a female attendant was beaten by the assistant engineer; at another time the physician's orders that a patient be kept under close watch were disregarded and she committed suicide. In this instance the physician's request for the attendant's dismissal was ignored because she was protected by one of the commissioners.¹ This is but a sample of the horrible evidence that was submitted at this time under sworn statement and not denied. Occasionally stories of mistreatment of patients by attendants who were protected by this system reached the press. After one such revelation a resolution was adopted by the board to the effect that, "since the public are led to believe that a portion of the present bad condition of the Insane Asylum is due to appointments made by the superintendent at the request of the County Commissioners," be it resolved that "the superintendent be directed to discharge any or all of the present employees and report to the Board any attempt made by individual commissioners to influence him in the appointment of particular persons."² Nothing came of this, but a little later a similar resolution covering all of the county institutions was adopted. This time a list was prepared showing the names of every employee, when appointed and on whose recommendation. The facts revealed for one institution, the insane asylum, are typical of all. Out of a total of 158 employees, only six had been appointed on the recommendation of the superintendent; all the others having been "endorsed" by either county commissioners, judges or some political organization. Further, out of this number only seven had been employed for more than a year,³ since every change in the personnel of the board was accompanied by an upheaval that reached the lowest paid institutional employee.

One might readily conclude that the perpetuation of this system which worked such a disservice to the inmates was a sign of callousness on the part of the commissioners; and while it cannot be denied that some of the commissioners were ruthless and dishonest, the majority of them would probably have been willing

¹State Commissioners of Public Charities, Special Report of an Investigation of the Management of the Cook County Hospital for the Insane, pp. 4-5.

²Proceedings, 1888, p. 425. ³Ibid., 1890, p.

to abolish the system if they had known how. Julia Lathrop, who had no patience with such political exploitation of human misery, diagnosed the situation when she said:

Commissioners are not responsible for the method; it is not unlawful, and it is convenient for them. They act from the pressure of public opinion translatable into votes, and modify their actions according to the strength of such pressure. . . . The public now has and will have exactly such institutions as it demands, managed exactly as its discrimination requires. It is as tiresome as that Carthage must be destroyed, but it is as true, that the charities of Cook County will never properly perform their duties until politics are divorced from them.¹

Public disapproval of the system was effectively registered for the first time in 1895, with the passage of the county civil service law, to which reference has already been made.

The Poorhouse

In so far as the physical accommodations provided the inmates of the poorhouse were concerned, the period can be divided into two intervals, with the year 1882 marking the beginning of substantial improvement. In that year a large building program was launched which, when completed, relieved the worst of the overcrowding and permitted a certain amount of classification which had hitherto been impossible.

Conditions during the first ten years were almost indescribably bad. During that time one of the newspapers described the exterior of the almshouse as a "shambling, helter skelter series of wooden buildings, hidden behind a decent brick front which is reminiscent of the newly washed face of a ragged newsboy." The reporter who wrote this description spent a day and night at the institution and came away scarcely believing what he had seen. He was particularly shocked at the overcrowding in the women's and children's department, where a woman had been delivered in the presence of all because there was no room in the hospital. He also described the tiers of wooden "sleeping boxes," devoid of covering of any kind which were the only beds the men inmates knew.² While this account may have been colored by partisan in-

¹Lathrop, op. cit., p. 161.

²Chicago Tribune, February 22, 1874.

terests, there is no reason to question the accuracy of the picture painted by the State Board of Charities a few years later. In describing these same buildings they say:

. . . . none of them can be said to have any plan--they are more like barns or barracks--immense areas of bare floor and walls, with innumerable windows; and the floors crowded with cheap iron strap bedsteads, on which are displayed wearisome rows of army blankets; large volcano heaters lift their heads above the general level, like solitary mountain peaks in a desert; lying and sitting in all directions may be seen the squalid faces of men, women and children, 'camped out, so to speak, in the wilderness, without privacy, without comforts, and not bound to each other by any tie of common descent or mutual interest.¹

In their next report they say:

There is but one term which will characterize the Cook County poorhouse; it is an old rookery; and should be torn down. It is a disgrace to the county and to the State and to every individual who is directly or indirectly responsible for its condition and management.²

This vigorous criticism, which was echoed by both of the leading newspapers, was in part responsible for the decision that was shortly made to borrow money for a building program at both the poorhouse and the insane asylum.

Early in 1880, bonds to the amount of \$1,158,000 were issued for the purpose.³ Approximately \$200,000 of this was used in the immediate construction of nine new buildings, which were known as the Infirmary Buildings and occupied in 1882-83.⁴ These consisted of an administration building (50' x 60'); a building to be used as living quarters for the employees (70' x 45'); two buildings (75' x 35') containing a hospital and a dining room, one for each sex (separation of married couples was rigidly adhered to even at meals); and what was badly needed, a building in which were housed a new kitchen and laundry on the first floor and a chapel and amusement hall on the upper. So cramped and in-

¹Illinois State Board of Charities, Annual Report, 1876, pp. 25-26.

²Ibid., 1878, p. 225. ³Proceedings, 1883, p. 657

⁴It will be recalled that the name "Infirmary" was abandoned in favor of "poorhouse" when there was criticism of the costs of maintaining the poor in 1886.

adequately equipped had the former kitchen been that it was said to have been impossible to serve anything but a "boiled dinner."

Most important of all were the two new dormitory buildings (125' x 35'). These were three stories high, provided beds for 480 men and 400 women and were said by the State Board to incorporate the most advanced conceptions of institutional planning.¹ The addition of a small "lying in" cottage a little later brought the total capacity up to 1,000 beds. Despite this increase it was only a matter of a few years until complaints of overcrowding were heard again. By 1888, the physician at the poorhouse reported that about 300 men were being forced every night to sleep on the floor.²

Sanitary facilities were always inadequate. Privy vaults which were unsanitary and built too close to the other buildings were used even after the additions were made in 1882. By 1886, inside toilets had been added, but they could frequently not be used due to shortage of water. Between 1871 and 1888, over \$30,000 was spent in drilling wells, none of which produced a flow of water sufficient to meet the needs.³ This constant shortage of water was not only a health hazard, but it also meant that there was no fire protection. Until 1886, kerosene lamps were used and it is remarkable that there were no serious fires. A perennial plea was made by the wardens and physicians for a more adequate water system. Finally in 1890 negotiations were undertaken with the council to have the city mains extended out to Dunning, and after many delays, in 1895 city water was made available.⁴

Attempts to Make the Poorhouse "Pay"

The idea that the poor should be made to work for any relief given them found frequent expression during the first sixty

¹Illinois State Board of Charities, Annual Report, 1880, pp. 231-33.

²Chicago Tribune, February 26, 1888.

³Proceedings, 1888, p. 679.

⁴Ibid., 1889, p. 583; 1890, p. 918; Official Messages, 1894-98, p. 22.

years that public assistance was given in Cook County. Attention has been called to the experiments in work relief made in many of the eastern cities during this time and this possibility was always considered when the care of the poor was under discussion. It is remarkable therefore that during this entire period Chicago provides not a single example of work relief outside the poorhouse.¹ It is likewise notable that while there was no shortage of suggestions for employing the inmates of the poorhouse after 1871, none of these ever went beyond the proposal stage.

In 1872, the Committee on Judiciary of the county board was delegated to study the advisability of establishing an "Industrial Department" at the poorhouse. In their report they marshal all of the old familiar arguments:

. . . . such a department in connection with the Poor House, Asylum and Farm, is an absolute necessity, and a protection to the county and its resources. The inmates of the Asylum and Poor House are rapidly increasing as our City and County grows. Many of them gain admission by imposition which it is impossible for the officers to detect, remain through the winter rather than work for a living, and as soon as warm weather comes, leave and become hangers-on of the various haunts of vice and idleness in the city, eking out a precarious existence from day to day. . . . Some means ought to be provided by which the county could be able to protect itself against this class of our population. . . . At the same time your committee are of the opinion that such a department would to a large extent aid in making the institution self sustaining. . . .²

Interesting also is the proposal that the destitute be "sentenced" to the poorhouse so that they could be forced to work and earn their maintenance. Fortunately this effort to convert the poorhouse into a bridewell was not successful.

The large amounts spent for relief during the winter of 1873-74 revived discussion of means by which the "County Poor House and Farm can be made to approximate self sustaining."³ At this time the editor of one of the newspapers caustically inquired whether if this could not be done "it would not be cheaper to

¹Despite the demands of the unemployed for work during the depression of 1873, all of the assistance given at this time was direct relief in the home.

²Proceedings, December Session, 1872, pp. 92-93.

³Ibid., 1874, p. 86.

board our paupers at the Grand Pacific, the Palmer or the Sherman House."¹ No further interest in the question was manifested until just before the opening of the new infirmary buildings in 1883 when a committee of three commissioners was appointed to make a tour of the eastern poor law institutions to investigate their "systems of pauper employment." After visiting the public institutions in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Boston, and New York, the committee returned, convinced that it was impossible to make such institutions "completely self sustaining."² Apparently the idea of employing the inmates for rehabilitative purposes was not considered, because when it was discovered that none of the eastern schemes was operating on a paying basis, all plans for such a system at Dunning were given up.

Towards the end of the period there is some realization of the difficulties involved in making the poorhouse "pay." A warden who had served three terms at the poorhouse said in his annual report: "It has long been my earnest desire to render some department of this institution self sustaining, in part, at least, but after numerous trials of the same I am compelled to acknowledge that owing to the infirm and decrepit condition of the inmates received in this institution I have found it almost impossible to carry my ideas into effect. . . ."³

This is an interesting statement because for the first time the real obstacle in the way of profitable employment of this group is set forth. All of the plans which had hitherto been projected were based on the assumption that the poorhouse harbored a large number of able-bodied persons, whereas just the opposite was the case. When employment was next discussed, it was from the point of view of the possible rehabilitation of the inmates rather than with any thought of having them earn a part of their maintenance.⁴

¹Chicago Times, October 20, 1874.

²Proceedings, 1883, p.

³Ibid., 1884, p.

⁴Ibid., 1890, p.

The Cook County Insane Asylum

In 1873, the county commissioners commenced suit in the circuit court of Cook County to obtain possession of a bequest left by Jonathan Burr. Burr, who was said to have "done more for charity and charitable institutions in Chicago than any other man, living or dead,"¹ died in 1869 leaving certain real estate in the city to a trustee to manage and hold the net annual income "until such time as an insane asylum shall be organized, located and established in the northern part of the State of Illinois under and by virtue of some state or municipal authority" and to convey the premises with the accumulated income "to the authority or corporation managing and controlling said asylum, but in trust, however to hold, manage, improve and invest the same, and the net income thereof to use and expend in and towards keeping and maintaining such asylum in a condition to relieve those who are so unfortunate as to need its treatment and care."²

It will be recalled that the county had in 1870 erected a separate building at the poorhouse for the care of the insane, which, without statutory authority, was referred to as the insane asylum.³ The commissioners contended that this building fulfilled the requirements set up in the Burr will, and they were supported in this claim by the circuit court which, in 1877, returned a decision in their favor. However, on appeal taken to the supreme court, in 1878 the decision of the lower court was reversed on the grounds that the Cook County Insane Asylum was merely a part of the poorhouse, and, as such, was not the sort of institution contemplated in the will.⁴ The trust, valued at approximately

¹Mrs. Myra Bradwell in the Chicago Legal News, I, 372. Jonathan Burr was one of the early members of the Board of the Home for the Friendless, and left part of his estate for the purpose of purchasing school books for indigent children in the public schools.

²Illinois State Board of Charities, Annual Report, 1878, pp. 53-54.

³Without statutory authority because the legislature did not authorize the construction of insane asylums by counties until 1874 (Revised Statutes of Illinois, 1874, sec. 25, p. 307).

⁴Charles Holden et al. v. The Board of Commissioners of Cook County, 87 Illinois 275 (1878).

\$36,000 at the time, was awarded to the Elgin State Hospital.

While this suit was pending, overcrowding in the insane department became so acute that it was necessary to provide additional room, particularly for those patients who were crowded into dark, makeshift cells in the basement. In 1873, the roof was therefore raised, and a fourth story added to the building, and in 1875 a new wing was constructed at a cost of \$163,796.¹ This wing, which was better planned than the rest of the building, brought the total bed capacity up to 350. Three years later, however, when the State Board of Charities made their annual inspection visit, there were 437 patients, 100 of whom had to sleep on the floor.²

By 1883, the average daily population was 592, but the actual capacity still remained 350. Two separate, detached brick buildings were built in 1884 and 1885, which relieved the overcrowding for a short time. Two years later another two-story building was added, part of which was to be used as an amusement hall. To keep up with the growing numbers to be cared for, it was soon necessary to convert this into a ward.³

In 1889, a new type of housing was inaugurated with the building of two cottages, which was followed by the construction of two more the next year. The commissioners were said to have been influenced in their decision to adopt this more modern type of building by the State Board of Charities.⁴ There was some discussion as to whether it might not be better to establish a separate institution away from Dunning, to be reserved exclusively for patients who were curable, but the cost of such a plan was thought to be more than the county could afford at that time.⁵ The four cottages which were built at a cost of \$55,933 provided

¹Proceedings, 1888, p. 679; George Leininger, M.D., "Chicago State Hospital" in H. H. Hurd, Institutional Care of the Insane in the United States and Canada, II, 283.

²Illinois State Board of Charities, Annual Report, 1878, p. 226.

³William Willard Burke, "The Supervision of the Care of the Mentally Diseased by the Illinois State Board of Charities, 1869-1909" (Unpublished Doctor's thesis, University of Chicago, 1934), p. 173.

⁴Ibid., p. 172.

⁵Proceedings, 1889, p. 840.

accommodations for 250 patients. Two of these were designed for the care of patients needing medical attention for diseases other than insanity, and had dining rooms attached to them. In other respects the cottages were identical, having a large living room, 61 x 38 feet, on the first floor along with both linen and attendant's rooms, and on the second floor a dormitory the same size as the living room and seven single rooms.¹ The completion of these four new units in 1890 brought the capacity up to 750 beds, but the number actually under care was 1,071. In 1892, about 200 patients were transferred to the state hospitals which reduced some of the congestion. For the rest of the time that Cook County maintained the institution, i.e., until 1912 when the state took over the county asylum and it became The Chicago State Hospital, the cottage plan was adhered to in all of the additions which were made.

Attention should be called here to the fact that while the larger proportion of Cook County insane were cared for at Dunning, there were always a number of patients distributed among the state asylums (Table 14). Actually commitments were always to state institutions rather than to the county insane asylum. According to the commitment papers issued by the county court, the county institution was to be used only for the temporary detention of patients pending their transfer to a state institution, although a person so detailed might spend the rest of his days there.² It is nowhere made clear how the patients were classified for the purpose of transfer. In 1894, it was said that the greater proportion of the patients of the county institution were incurable, which would indicate that the state facilities were used for the more hopeful cases.³

¹State Board of Charities, Report, 1890, p. 115.

²Ibid., p. 116.

³Ibid., 1894, p. 51.

TABLE 14

COOK COUNTY PATIENTS IN STATE HOSPITALS
FOR THE INSANE, 1873-1893*

Year	Total	Northern Insane Hospital	Southern Insane Hospital	Eastern Insane Hospital	Asylum for Insane Criminals
1873-74	53	53	..	...	..
1874-75	113	112	1	...	..
1875-76	74	74	..	...	..
1876-77	70	70	..	...	..
1877-78	112	111	1	...	..
1878-79	44	44	..	...	..
1879-80	62	35	1	27	..
1880-81	149	71	..	78	..
1881-82	108	82	..	26	..
1882-83	157	46	1	110	..
1883-84	115	28	1	86	..
1884-85	276	38	..	238	..
1885-86	136	35	..	101	..
1886-87	100	30	..	70	..
1887-88	113	16	..	97	..
1888-89	148	35	..	113	..
1889-90	399	4	..	395	..
1890-91	484	254	..	230	..
1891-92	662	326	..	292	44
1892-93	684	225	..	446	13
1893-94	410	219	..	177	14

*Data taken from State Board of Charities, Biennial Reports.

Investigation of the County Asylum
in 1886

From 1883 on there was an increasing amount of interest on the part of organized private groups in the management of the insane asylum which culminated in the public investigation of 1886, and it is probably safe to say that after this time there was some sustained improvement in conditions. Among the private organizations which became actively interested in the insane asylum at about this time were the Chicago Women's Club, the Citizen's Association, and the Chicago Medical Society.

In 1884, the Women's Club submitted a petition to the county board asking that a woman physician be appointed to care for female patients in the asylum. The board acceded to this

request and appointed Dr. Delia E. Howe at a salary of \$25 per month.¹ Dr. Howe served less than a year and was forced to resign, whereupon the Reform Committee of the Club again asked that a woman be appointed and urged that she be paid the wages of a professional person. After some debate, the board agreed to this and appointed Dr. Harriett Alexander at a salary of \$100 per month.²

The Citizen's Association attempted to investigate charges of mismanagement at the insane asylum in 1884, but were forced to abandon their investigation because they could not summon witnesses. The following year they joined with the Women's Club and the Medical Society in requesting the governor to have the State Board make an investigation and at this time offered the assistance of their attorney and a special committee appointed for the purpose.³

The incident which brought this united demand for a public inquiry was a speech made in November, 1885, by Dr. James Kiernan before the Chicago Medical Society. Dr. Kiernan, who was one of the important pioneers in psychiatry in this country, had been appointed medical superintendent of the insane asylum in 1884, but resigned in September, 1885, due to the very unsatisfactory conditions at the institution which he felt powerless to remedy.

Dr. Kiernan told of being threatened by the warden when he attempted to secure better food for his patients, and cited numerous examples of neglect, brutality, and insubordination on the part of attendants. He read a letter from Dr. Delia Howe, to whom reference has already been made, which is interesting because it gives a clear picture of the manner in which the patients suffered at the hands of incompetent attendants:

In each ward was kept a bottle of whiskey, and a bottle of strong sleeping medicine of bromides and chloral, which the attendants dealt out at their discretion. Many times on being called to a patient, I received this history of the case: "I gave her a drink of whiskey and then a dose of sleeping medicine, but she did not get any better, so I called

¹Proceedings, 1883, p. 178; Annals of the Chicago Women's Club, p. 43.

²Proceedings, 1884, pp. 516, 604.

³Citizen's Association, Annual Report, 1886, p. 6.

you." It took some time to impress the idea that I preferred to be called before the ever-ready remedies were used.¹

Dr. Kiernan said that Dr. Howe had been forced to resign because of her complaints to the board about the quality of food served the patients. On one occasion she produced an iron ring from a pig's nose which she had taken out of a patient's food, and when she upbraided the cook for this and for the pig's heads which were regularly served with the bristles still on, the cook protested to the commissioner who had secured his appointment for him.²

This statement of conditions was given wide publicity and the State Board immediately launched its investigation, the results of which were published as a separate report in 1886. It was brought out that the per capita cost of food at the county institution was nearly twice that at state institutions, that it was badly cooked and in every way unsuitable for the sick or insane persons. The diet was so deficient in certain necessary foods that there was a serious epidemic of scurvy which lasted from February until July, 1885, during which time there were several deaths from the disease.³ According to the testimony the commonest article of meat were the pig's heads which Dr. Howe had protested (it was subsequently discovered that these were being charged for by the county meat contractor at the prevailing price of loin of pork). Medicine was administered in a most haphazard manner, powerful sedatives being kept on the wards in large bottles to be given by untrained attendants.⁴ Requisitions for drugs not in stock were either filled "after the patient had passed beyond the need of all medicine," or entirely disregarded.⁵

There were many examples of insubordination, Dr. S. V. Clevenger, the pathologist, swearing that "brawls and fights were the common order of things."⁶ Intemperance on the part of em-

¹Chicago Medical Journal and Examiner, LI, No. 5 (November, 1885), 429.

²Ibid., p. 436.

³State Commissioners of Public Charities, Special Report of an Investigation of the Management of the Cook County Hospital for the Insane, pp. 8-9.

⁴Ibid., p. 12. ⁵Ibid., p. 13. ⁶Ibid., pp. 4-5.

ployees was the rule rather than the exception. Liquor was kept in the drug room and was said to have been dispensed with great freedom to visitors, officers and employees. The bill for this one item in 1884 was \$1,574 and for the following year \$2,268, which the Board pointed out was all out of proportion to the amount spent for this same item at the state hospitals.¹

The Board found it "impossible to affix or apportion to individuals the blame of any irregularities or defects which may exist," because "the power which should be concentrated in a single, responsible head, is scattered and diffused, until it is no longer possible to trace its ramifications."² Of the committee system of administration the Board said that "the commissioners themselves spend an unnecessary amount of time at the hospital" and "what makes it still more objectionable in its practical working is the fact that individual members of the committee claim to exercise and do exercise the powers which of right reside only in the committee as a whole, and that the committee itself keeps no record of its proceedings nor of its orders."³

The waste and needless misery caused by having an annually elected board of commissioners experiment with the management of the institution was not overlooked in the report: "The county board . . . is a changing body; it has no opportunity to inform itself as to the nature of insanity, the needs of the insane, the principles of organization, or the practical methods of work best adapted to the successful management of a public institution; experience has demonstrated that it does not even know what a public institution ought to cost for maintenance, nor how the items of expenditure should be apportioned."⁴

It is interesting that the recommendations which were made were in accordance with best present-day practice. It was suggested that an advisory board, composed of leading Cook County citizens be appointed who would have oversight over the institution and be authorized to appoint a superintendent. The superintendent was to have complete responsibility for administration, was to serve during the pleasure of the Board and have the power

¹Ibid., pp. 6-7.

²Ibid., p. 15.

³Ibid., p. 4.

⁴Ibid., p. 16.

to select his own staff. The members of the investigating committee, however, supposed that the county board was "scarcely prepared for so radical a change of policy" and urged as an alternative that a single executive head be appointed to be invested with all of the administrative authority previously exercised by the Committee on Public Charities. They were unhesitating in their advocacy of a medical man for the position:

The reason why a medical man should be at the head of this hospital, rather than a business man is that in a medical institution every question to be decided has a medical bearing, which a non-medical man may not perceive, and the final word on every subject should be spoken by the physician from which there should be no appeal. There are physicians of experience, good judgment and business capacity, to be had for a sufficient salary; and the county can afford to pay the highest salary for the services of such a man.¹

Neither of these recommendations for basic reform was followed by the commissioners. That there was some improvement in conditions was due to the continued interest of the private organizations and the fact that the "ring" which was in control at the time of the investigation was shortly turned out of office.²

The Detention Hospital

In 1890, at the very end of the period, a detention hospital for the insane was built. Although not one of the Dunning institutions, it is included here as a part of the county's provision for the insane. Prior to its construction patients awaiting commitment had been detained in a special section of the county jail.

A three-story brick building was constructed on the grounds

¹Ibid., p. 19.

²Conditions at the insane asylum were criticized in the press in 1889 when a patient died of what appeared to be violence at the hands of attendants. Three attendants were indicted, and a grand jury selected to investigate. The grand jury found serious overcrowding, but concluded that the administration was not to blame. The attendants were found not guilty. It is clear from the newspaper accounts that this investigation was prompted by factional interests. Dr. Kiernan had been reappointed and this seems to have been an attempt to discredit him on the part of those who had been exposed earlier (Chicago Tribune, April 29, 30; May 5; June 20; July 21, 1889).

of the county hospital for this purpose. In addition to providing quarters for insane patients, a floor was set aside for children awaiting commitment to the industrial school.¹ The State Board of Charities noted that "the institution was found to be complete and well equipped in every department"; that the rooms were "models of cleanliness" and that "the inmates seemed tenderly cared for."²

Despite this promising beginning complaints were shortly received from other hospitals that the patients transferred from the detention hospital were received in a bruised and wounded condition, and that they were filthy and infested with vermin. All that need be said of the resulting investigation in which these charges were fully substantiated, is that it provided one more example of the tragic consequences of patronage as a personnel policy where the care of helpless persons is concerned.³

¹See below, pp. 165-74.

²Illinois State Board of Charities, Annual Report, 1890, p. 137.

³Proceedings, 1893, p. 390.

CHAPTER IX

THE COUNTY HOSPITAL

Attention has already been called to the fact that Cook County frequently made provision for its destitute citizens by establishing institutions for which there existed at the time no statutory authority. The first poorhouse was built on the town square four years before the legislature passed the law permitting counties to make such provision; the office of county agent existed for more than twenty years before it was recognized by law, and the insane asylum built in 1869 antedated by five years the passage of the law authorizing such construction. In the case of the third large poor law institution, the county hospital, the commissioners again built without legislative sanction, but this time there was no subsequent law passed to cover their action. Whether the authority to make such provision was implied in the obligation imposed by the poor law to care for the sick poor was never decided by the Illinois courts. It was, however, discussed from time to time by the commissioners when the costs of operating the hospital became burdensome.

In 1886, when the county was nearly bankrupt, there was acute overcrowding at the hospital and the expenses of maintaining it were exceptionally high. Much of this overcrowding was attributed to the sick poor who were said to be shipped to Chicago by other counties and states. Various proposals were made at this time to relieve the county of part or all of this burden. The first was that since there was no legal obligation to maintain a hospital, the institution should either be closed, or the city forced to operate it. The committee appointed to discuss this matter with the city council never reported. Other suggestions made at this time were that the hospital be closed to all but legal residents, and that a law be passed making the railroads financially responsible for any indigent sick person brought into the city.¹ The following year another unsuccessful effort

¹Proceedings, 1885-86, pp. 244, 466, 571.

was made to have the city take over the hospital. A little later the president of the board, who apparently had not read the poor law, advocated its closing on the grounds that the "legal obligation of the County ended with the support of the pauper and the insane."¹ Nothing ever came of any of these proposals. Whether the commissioners always realized it or not, the county did have placed upon it by the poor law the duty of caring for the sick poor, and this fact was undoubtedly discovered for them by the county attorney before any of these plans could be put into effect. The practical difficulty of using the poorhouse nine miles away for this purpose must also have been made clear when these proposals were examined.

Population and Cost of Operation

The growth in population of the hospital is seen in Table 15. In 1871, the total number treated was a little less than

TABLE 15
PATIENTS IN COOK COUNTY HOSPITAL, 1871-1893^a

Year	Number in Hospital at Beginning of Year ^b	Admitted During the Year	Total Number Treated	Daily Average
1871-72.....	141	2,061	2,202	197
1872-73.....	171	(c)	(c)	(c)
1873-74.....	140	2,148	2,288	148
1874-75.....	148	2,039	2,187	173
1875-76.....	172	1,956	2,128	175
1876-77.....	175	2,113	2,288	186
1877-78.....	(c)	(c)	(c)	190
1878-79.....	(c)	(c)	(c)	201
1879-80.....	188	2,801	2,989	251
1880-81.....	(c)	(c)	(c)	351
1881-82.....	(c)	(c)	3,742	343
1882-83.....	(c)	(c)	5,194	353
1883-84.....	(c)	(c)	5,934	387
1884-85.....	277	6,987	7,264	499
1885-86.....	466	6,975	7,441	565
1886-87.....	(c)	(c)	6,886	620
1888 ^b	(c)	(c)	(c)	489
1889.....	(c)	6,330	(c)	477
1890.....	488	7,726	8,214	555
1891.....	573	9,378	9,951	643
1892.....	709	8,499	9,208	603
1893.....	666	(c)	(c)	777

^aData taken from Proceedings and Reports of the Warden of Cook County Hospital.

^bFiscal year changed from September 1 to December 31.

^cFigures not available.

¹Proceedings, 1886-87, pp. 4, 393.

2,000, while by 1891 this figure is just under 10,000. The costs of operation are shown in Table 16. The higher per capita for 1874-76 and 1884-87 should not be taken as meaning that the patients during those years were enjoying higher standards of care. On the contrary, it was during these two periods that the county board was most corrupt, and the patients benefited not at all from the increased expenditures.

TABLE 16

TOTAL AND PER CAPITA COST OF OPERATING COOK COUNTY
HOSPITAL, 1871-1893^a

Year	Average Number of Inmates	Total Cost	Per Capita Cost
1871-72.....	(c)	\$ 38,194	\$ (c)
1872-73.....	(c)	45,927	(c)
1873-74.....	148	48,679	328.91
1874-75.....	173	54,028	312.30
1875-76.....	175	87,701	501.15
1876-77.....	186	91,904	494.11
1877-78.....	190	85,315	449.03
1878-79.....	201	74,007	368.19
1879-80.....	251	82,979	330.23
1880-81.....	351	108,059	307.86
1881-82.....	343	112,713	328.60
1882-83.....	353	115,915	328.37
1883-84.....	387	161,331	416.86
1884-85.....	499	214,735	430.33
1885-86.....	565	281,582	498.37
1886-87.....	620	272,807	440.01
1888 ^b	489	169,361	346.34
1889.....	477	162,247	340.14
1890.....	555	175,568	316.23
1891.....	643	189,493	294.70
1892.....	603	188,248	312.18
1893.....	777	225,417	290.11

^aCompiled from Proceedings.

^bFiscal year changed from September 1 to December 31.

^cFigures not available.

Physical Plant

In 1871, the question of renewing the lease on the hospital arose. It will be recalled that the county had turned over the old reform school property to the city in exchange for the

use of the "City Hospital."¹ On July 17, 1871, the county made an offer to the city council which was accepted by the terms of which the city vacated the reform school tract and gave the county a free lease on the city hospital in exchange for \$50,000 paid for the improvements which the city had made on the reform school property.²

This temporary arrangement was made because the county authorities had already realized that neither the hospital building nor the site would ever be satisfactory. In August, 1872, the Committee on Hospital reported that the location was not only unwholesome and inconvenient because of its proximity to the packing houses and railroad tracks, but there was too little ground available for the exercise of convalescent patients.³ For this reason they recommended that a new site be purchased, and a resolution was passed authorizing the county clerk to advertise for a plot to contain no less than one nor more than five acres to be located on the west side of the city. Several lots were considered and the charge was frequently made in the press that these negotiations, which continued over a period of three years, were being conducted in the commissioners' "usual high handed style."⁴ Finally in May, 1874, a 12 acre plot was purchased for \$145,000. This property occupied the tract of land bounded by Harrison, Polk, Wood and Lincoln streets and is the site of the present county hospital.⁵

It was at first decided that no buildings would be constructed on the new site until the expiration of the lease in 1877; however in 1875 the Hospital Committee and the medical staff urged that work be started at once:

¹See above, p. 66.

²Council Proceedings, 1870-71, p. 226; Rich, op. cit., p. 35.

³Proceedings, 1871-72, p. 65.

⁴Chicago Tribune, August 9, September 6, 1874; Chicago Times, August 4, 1874. The price paid for the property was out of all proportion to prevailing land values which makes it seem likely that the newspaper charges of graft were not unfounded.

⁵Proceedings, 1873-74, p. 235.

The hygienic surroundings and management of the building at present occupied as a county hospital are miserably poor. It is situated on low, swampy ground, in a direct line of wind currents from the river. The ventilation is imperfect; the sewage is deficient; the location is extremely noisy. . . . The Medical Staff are able to allow but 500 to 600 feet of air space to each patient; whereas, they should have 1500 to 1600 feet. They are thus trying to accommodate three times as many patients as they have room for. The result is what might be expected, and what the Medical Staff state it to be: diseases incident to overcrowding, and a death rate entirely too high.¹

They reported that the cost of repairs for the two previous years was sufficient to pay interest on a \$100,000 building and strongly advised against investing any more money in the old hospital. A few weeks later the board passed a resolution looking to the immediate construction of a new building to cost not over \$150,000.²

The "pavilion" plan was adopted in the construction of the hospital so that additions could be made at any time. Plans for two medical pavilions were approved in May, 1875, and the first patients were moved into the new hospital on October 6, 1876.³ The pavilions were three stories high with attic. Each floor was divided into a large ward, a smaller ward and a number of private rooms; and in each pavilion there was a diet kitchen and a small dining room for convalescent patients. There were marble wash basins in each ward with hot and cold water; lighting and ventilation were well provided for and the whole arrangement was described as being "good and satisfactory."⁴

Plans for the kitchen, laundry building, mortuary and boiler house were approved in February, 1876. The morgue was equipped with an amphitheatre for students where autopsies were performed.⁵ A clinical amphitheatre providing seats for 600

¹Ibid., 1874-75, pp. 118-19.

²Cook County Board of Commissioners, Report on the Cost of Public Buildings in Cook County, 1866-December 3, 1883, pp. 230, 239.

³Proceedings, 1874-75, p. 320; Frank Billings, M.D., "History of the Cook County Hospital from 1876 to the Present Time" in History of Medicine and Surgery and Physicians and Surgeons of Chicago, p. 264.

⁴State Board of Charities, Annual Report, 1873, p. 229.

⁵Ibid., p. 229; Andreas, op. cit., III, 157.

persons and connecting corridors were completed in 1877. This building was used for clinics during the week and for religious services on Sundays. On the first floor of the building certain rooms were set aside for patients with contagious diseases.¹ The total cost of this first unit was \$581,874.²

The two pavilions provided accommodations for only 300 patients, although the attic was finished off and alterations made in the basement to obtain additional bed space. The building was overcrowded from the very first and patients were compelled to lie on the floor and sleep two in one small cot.³

A second building program was launched in 1882 when plans for the administration building and two isolated pavilions with connecting corridors were approved. This addition was completed in 1884 at a cost of \$282,717.⁴ The administration building which was described as presenting an "imposing appearance" was 90' x 158', five stories high and occupied the center front of the grounds. On each side of it and connected by two corridors 95 feet long were the two new pavilions, each 60' x 90'. Included in the administration building were offices, drug room and officers' kitchen on the lower and basement floor; a reception room, warden's offices, committee room, medical board room and a large dining room on the main floor; and apartments for officers and house staff on the upper stories.⁵ This addition brought the capacity up to 550 beds, but there were frequently seven or eight hundred patients under care. The only other addition made to the hospital before 1893 was a building in 1889 which was used for shops where carpentry, upholstering, etc., were carried on,⁶ and was later fitted up as a contagious ward.

¹State Board of Charities, Annual Report, 1884, p. 236; Rich, op. cit., p. 42.

²Proceedings, 1888, p. 679.

³Report on the Cost of Public Buildings in Cook County, 1866-December 3, 1883, p. 348.

⁴Proceedings, 1888, p. 679.

⁵State Board of Charities, Annual Report, 1884, p. 234.

⁶Ibid., 1890, p. 118.

Contagious Disease Hospital

In 1891, a group of citizens petitioned the county commissioners for a ward for contagious diseases at the hospital.¹ At this time the only special quarters available were the few rooms in the building in which the amphitheater was located, and when these were filled up, the entire hospital was endangered by the overflow of patients with contagious diseases into the other wards. The commissioners insisted that the care of patients suffering from contagious diseases was the responsibility of the city and referred the question to the county attorney for an opinion. He held that "the County Hospital exists and is maintained because it is the duty of the county to care for the destitute sick, and if the diseases with which such destitute persons are afflicted are contagious, it is none the less the duty of the county to provide for them."²

Reference has already been made to the confusion existing at an earlier time between care of the sick under the poor law and that provided by the municipal health authorities.³ In 1914, it was said that "these relations between the city and county government are not clearly defined anywhere" and it is interesting to note that at the present time these two areas of responsibility still remain undefined.⁴

Due to lack of funds the county fitted up the carpentry shop as a temporary isolation department.⁵ A year later an additional pavilion was built, the fourth floor of which was to be used for cases of diphtheria, scarlet fever, and all other con-

¹Proceedings, 1890, p. 497. ²Ibid., p. 782.

³See above, pp. 58-61.

⁴County and city authorities who were consulted at the time this was written stated that with the exception of smallpox, for the care of which the city maintains a separate institution, both the County Contagious Disease Hospital and the Municipal Hospital care for the same diseases. Distribution of cases between these two institutions is made by the Board of Health. The basis of allocation is, in general, the amount of bed space existing at either hospital, although special facilities for treating certain diseases is sometimes a factor. All patients from Cook County towns outside Chicago go to the county institution.

⁵Proceedings, 1890, p. 872.

tagious diseases but smallpox. This department was completely isolated, having a separate stairway, elevator, kitchen and laundry. The cost of the building was \$83,640.¹

Administration

In 1880, the State Board of Charities described the Cook County Hospital as being "the best built and the poorest managed hospital in the country."² The administrative organization of the hospital was the same as that of the poorhouse and insane asylum except for the medical staff; and it was proven to be just as unsatisfactory. The fact that the hospital was located in the city meant that the committee could participate even more closely in details of administration. During the years when the "ring" were in control, the hospital was its headquarters and as a consequence suffered disproportionately from the graft and corruption which characterized its administration. All but one member of the Hospital Committee were members of the "ring" and were indicted in 1886.

The wardens up until 1887 were the worst type of professional politicians; two of them were indicted for conspiracy to defraud the county.³ Less is known about those who were in office after that time, however in 1890 it was said that it had always been a practice to appoint persons "who had no experience and were wholly incompetent to fill the position."⁴ Charges of graft and mismanagement were perennially made against the hospital administration. Discussion of the endless investigations which were conducted is, however, unprofitable, since the evidence submitted was exactly what might be anticipated from such a combination of patronage, divided authority, and incompetent personnel; and the results in terms of standards of care for the

¹Ibid., 1892, pp. 964, 1011.

²State Board of Charities, Annual Report, 1890, p. 316.

³J. H. Dixon, who served from January, 1882, until August, 1883, and W. T. McGarigle, who served from September, 1883, until July, 1887. Chicago Times, February 14, 1883; Chicago Tribune, April 9, 1887

⁴State Board of Charities, Annual Report, 1890, p. 118.

patients and costs to the taxpayer were what has already been seen at the other two institutions.

Medical Control

The basis of organization of the original medical staff of the hospital was equal representation on the part of the two medical colleges then in Chicago, the Rush Medical College and the Chicago Medical College, and a sufficient number of non-college men to constitute a majority of the entire number. It was a self-governing and a self-perpetuating body and it was considered an honor to be elected to it. Unfortunately, rivalry developed between the two medical colleges leading to such discord that, in 1871, the entire staff was dismissed and a new one appointed by the county commissioners.¹

In 1878, an agreement was made between the Chicago Medical College, Rush, and the members of the profession not engaged in teaching on the one side, and the county board on the other by which the attending staff was organized by the nomination of one-third of the staff by each of the colleges and one-third by the profession at large and elected by the board. In the event that any of the nominees were objected to by the board, it was necessary to submit other nominations. This plan was said to have proven entirely satisfactory and continued until 1882:

At this time, the political activities of the Board of County Commissioners were manifested by an attempt to direct and in some events to embarrass the professional work of the hospital. Dr. Edward W. Lee was at this time making some experiments on skin grafting to hasten the recovery of patients who suffered from large superficial skin defects. These experiments included the attempt to graft the skin of a chicken upon a human being and also the skin of a lamb upon a patient. These attempts which were unattended with any cruelty to either fowl, beast, or man, were finally interfered with by the hospital committee of the board by the suspension of Dr. Lee from the staff. This was followed by an indignant protest from the remainder of the staff and a demand for the reinstatement of Dr. Lee; this being refused, the whole staff resigned.²

Between 1882 and 1905, when the members of the attending

¹Quine, op. cit., pp. 261-62.

²Billings, op. cit., p. 266.

staff were placed under civil service, the commissioners made their own appointments, frequently it was said "without due consideration for the professional qualifications of the appointees." On one occasion actual graft was practiced in the sale of positions on the staff to ambitious doctors by members of the county board.¹ These positions were so much sought after that there were not enough to go around, and so the board doubled the number. In order to meet the increasing political pressure for these appointments, a consulting staff was established in 1887, to which were appointed physicians who wished an official relationship to the hospital without the usual responsibilities.² These appointments carried with them a privilege and an opportunity to teach medical students in the hospital.

A separate staff of Homeopathic physicians was authorized by the board in 1881 and given jurisdiction over one-fifth of all the patients who were admitted. A proportionate number of Homeopathic internes was allowed at the same time. In 1889, a similar arrangement was made with the Eclectic physicians. In neither case were patients permitted to express a choice of the treatment they preferred. With the adoption of civil service in 1905, sectarian medicine ceased to be recognized.³

It is worthy of note that from the very first internes were selected as a result of civil service examination, the first examination being given in 1866.⁴ Until 1880, the medical students were permitted in the wards for teaching purposes, but after that time this privilege was denied and they were allowed only to attend clinics and observe operations in the amphitheater. This was generally regarded as being a distinct loss to the patients since under the critical eye of the student the physician was spurred to his best efforts. Another result of denying the physicians teaching privileges was that they were less regular in their attendance and left more of the treatment to internes. A young interne naively explained to Julia Lathrop that he preferred his position in the Cook County Hospital to a similar one in a New York hospital because:

¹Ibid., p. 265.

²Proceedings, 1886, p. 204.

³Billings, op. cit., p. 267.

⁴Quine, op. cit., p. 262.

There, about all an interne can do is to follow after the outside doctors on their rounds, and watch them, and hear what they say, and see their prescriptions. But here the outside doctors do not visit regularly, and do not interfere with the interne's treatment.¹

In 1892, the medical staff petitioned the board to reopen the wards to students of the various medical colleges, but the warden objected and the board sustained his objection, and it was not until many years after the close of this period that the wards were again available for teaching purposes.

Development of Nursing Service

Before 1881, the nurses at the county hospital were political appointees who came and went with every turn of the political wheel. Among these political dependents the larger number were men, although there were some women who were described as being "mostly of the Sairy Gamp type." Much of the nursing was done by convalescents who attempted to care for those less sick than themselves.² The harmful effects of this unskilled attendance was appreciated by a group of Chicago women who met in the summer of 1880 to consider ways of improving it. Plans for a training school for nurses were discussed, and steps to carry this into effect taken almost immediately. Before the summer was over a charter for the establishment of the "Illinois Training School for Nurses" was applied for and was granted on September 15.³

At the same time was made the first proposal to the county board that the students of the school be allowed to take over some of the nursing in the county hospital. The office of warden was filled at the time by a man who was later found to have been systematically robbing the county, and he was understandably opposed to the idea of having anyone in the hospital who might report on his dishonest activities. He did not believe in "female nurses"

¹Lathrop, op. cit., pp. 154-55.

²Grace Fay Schryver, A History of the Illinois Training School for Nursing, 1880-1929 (Chicago, 1930), p. 6.

³The application for the charter bore the following signatures: Sarah L. Wright, Sarah Hackett Stevenson, Margaret Lawrence, Lucy L. Flower, Elizabeth B. Carpenter.

and said that he had male nurses "who had been in the hospital eight years and he did not think that the ladies could furnish any better ones."¹ For a long time the board ignored all petitions and communications and would observe no appointments to discuss the matter. Finally an election carried off some of the objectors and the women armed themselves with a new weapon in the form of an advisory board composed of men and "renewed their attack upon the fortress they were determined to possess."

Now it showed signs of yielding. A parley was held, the names on that second or advisory board were considered, the portcullis was raised, the bridge let down, and the besiegers admitted. To be sure, there were conditions imposed and promises exacted and penalties threatened if the authorities of the Training School should ever dare to assert themselves in an unbecoming manner.²

In October, 1880, the women's committee sent a letter to the board in which they promised "to be a peaceable, and not a disturbing element" in the hospital, but they made it clear that there was one point upon which they would insist, namely, that the selection of students be left with them.

We are proposing to build up a system for training skilled nurses that will greatly benefit not only Cook County Hospital but the City of Chicago itself. In doing so, we assume a great responsibility. It is but fair and reasonable then that we select for ourselves the material to be used. . . . We regard this as the key to the entire situation, and we must yield it to none if we would make our plan a success.³

With considerable misgiving the board finally accepted the proposition in November and agreed to have them occupy one medical and one surgical ward, subject to the rules and regulations of the hospital.⁴ On May 1st of the following year the first student nurses were admitted to these two wards, and in October the lying-in ward was turned over to the school, the county paying \$50 per month for the services of the nurses.⁵ In

¹Schryver, op. cit., p. 10.

²Extract from letter by Margaret Lawrence (ibid., p. 12).

³Ibid., p. 11. ⁴Proceedings, 1879, p. 352.

⁵Ibid., 1880, p. 359; Billings, op. cit., p. 263.

January, 1882, the school asked for and was given charge of all of the gynecological and obstetrical wards.¹ In 1883, the remaining surgical wards were given to them,² and when the contagious disease hospital was opened, it, too, was placed under their control. At the end of the period the only wards not having this service were those for venereal diseases and these were included in 1897.³

Although the training school could not escape entirely the vicissitudes of politics, no serious attempt was ever made to interfere with their service. After the "boodlers" had brought the county to the verge of bankruptcy in 1887, the reform board drastically reduced the amount of nursing service "in the interest of economy"; however, the reaction of the press to this particular economy measure was so unfavorable that it was promptly restored to its usual level. Of that period it was later said that "However corrupt the affairs of the County Board may have been (and corrupt they certainly were) the hospital and patients had been well taken care of."⁴

While much of the public money that was spent for the care of the sick poor at the county hospital was wasted and misappropriated and brought no benefit to the patients, they were protected from some of the worst effects of a politically ridden administration by the presence of the nurses as the sick and insane at the Dunning institutions were not. The development of a trained nursing service was the great gain of the period.

¹Proceedings, 1881, p. 4. For this they received \$2,100 per year in addition to the \$3,000 they were already receiving. The nurses' laundry was also done free of charge by the hospital after this time.

²Ibid., 1882, p. 37. ³Rich, op. cit., p. 92.

⁴Schryver, op. cit., p. 54.

CHAPTER X

DEPENDENT CHILDREN IN COOK COUNTY

In the years between 1870 and 1890 there were indications of a growing realization that the almshouse was not a fit place for children, and steps were taken in a good many of the states during this time to make more suitable provision. Ohio had led off in 1866 with a permissive law for county orphanages; Massachusetts had abolished the adult almshouse department at the State primary school at Monson in 1872, and Michigan had opened its first state school for dependent children in 1874. Before 1880, only two states, New York and Wisconsin, had passed laws requiring the removal of children from almshouses, although in the next decade several other states followed. Leadership in securing this legislation was usually from the state boards of charities which existed in most of the states by this time. The Illinois State Board was slower in taking up this movement and it was not until 1919 that the Illinois law was passed.¹

In 1879, the Illinois legislature passed the "Industrial School for Girls Act" which, while marking the beginning of a new type of care for large numbers of dependent children by committing the counties to a policy of subsidizing private child-caring agencies, did not have the effect of removing all children from the almshouse. Before discussing this legislation which is of great importance in the history of child care in Cook County, a word should be said about the children who remained out at Dunning.

Children in the Almshouse

In 1880, approximately 13 per cent of the inmates of the county poorhouses in Illinois were children.² The proportion of children in the Cook County institution was, however, always less than this due to the large number of private child-caring insti-

¹Attempts in 1897 and 1899 to have such laws passed were unsuccessful.

²State Board of Charities, Report, 1880, p. 290.

tutions and agencies in Chicago, there being twelve in or near the city in 1880. The number of children in the Cook County Almshouse from 1878 to 1892 as reported by the State Board at the time of its biennial visit is shown in Table 17.

TABLE 17

CHILDREN UNDER SIXTEEN YEARS OF AGE IN THE
COOK COUNTY ALMSHOUSE, 1878-1892^a

Year	Total Population	Children
1878.....	1,300	150
1880.....	(b)	(b)
1882.....	1,079	78
1884.....	1,161	66
1886.....	955	71
1890.....	1,382	52
1892.....	1,041	35

^aData taken from Illinois Board of Public Charities, Biennial Reports.

^bNo report.

The conditions under which these children lived prior to 1871 has already been described,¹ and there was no improvement during this second period. They suffered with the old, the sick, and the insane from overcrowding, poor food, and all the other consequences of unsatisfactory administration. The commissioners were aware of the demoralizing effects upon children of such an environment and the matter of their removal was frequently discussed.

In 1872, the Superintendent of Public Charity recommended that children whose parents were admitted to the almshouse be taken away from them. The board realized that there was a legal question involved in this proposal and referred the matter to the Committee on Judiciary. This committee reported that such a plan would be "eminently desirable" but pointed out that this could not legally be done without the consent of the parents. They were of the opinion that it might be possible to have the probate

¹See above, pp. 32-37.

court take jurisdiction over them as minors, but said that this would be a tedious process and urged instead that a bill be presented to the legislature abridging the parent's rights to his child in the event the parents were adjudged paupers.¹ There is no record that such a bill was ever presented.

During the next ten years there is occasional reference made to children who had been adopted from the almshouse, but very little use was made of indenture during this time. It was commonly used by the private institutions in the city, but only rarely is there mention of a child being apprenticed from the almshouse. The explanation for this is probably to be found in Julia Lathrop's description of these children.

There are here usually from fifty to seventy-five children, of whom a large proportion are young children with their mothers, and very few of whom are for adoption. The remainder, perhaps a third, are the residuum of all the orphan asylums and hospitals, children whom no one cares to adopt because they are unattractive or scarred or sickly. These children are sent to the public school across the street from the poor farm. Of course they wore hideous clothes and of course the outside children sometimes jeer at them.²

A committee was appointed in 1879 to consult with the private child-caring agencies as to the possibility of their taking all the children at the almshouse. This committee never reported but a few weeks later the Home for the Friendless offered to take all the Protestant children and the St. Vincent de Paul Society agreed to accept the Catholic children. The board voted to accept these offers with the statement that the county had the legal right to do this, and the county attorney was directed to take any "necessary action to have these placements made legal."³ It is not known how many children were affected by this decision or what means were used to obtain the parents' consent, if it was obtained; but all of the children in the poorhouse at this time

¹Proceedings, December Session, 1872, p. 91.

²Lathrop, op. cit., p. 148. In 1877, a law was passed permitting the payment of tuition of children living in county poorhouses (Laws of Illinois, 1877, p. 145). The school at the Cook County Poorhouse was closed in 1880.

³Proceedings, 1879, p. 37.

were actually removed.¹ It should be added that no appropriation was made to either society.

By the end of 1880 the county agent who had the enforcing of the rule that no parents were to be admitted to the poorhouse who refused to give their consent to the adoption of their children, said that it was "an almost every day occurrence that a great majority of parents (mothers especially) will not comply with your rules requiring them to surrender their children to the different institutions who dispose of them through court decisions." While admitting that in some instances institutional placement might be desirable, he was opposed to it as a fixed policy:

A widow who is struggling to rear her children in an honest manner and give them an education should not be made to feel that she is a pauper. Indeed, that epithet applied to most of our worthy poor is ungenerous and the moment they think or feel they are classed as paupers, they lose that self-respect which it is necessary for them to retain. . .

. . .²

Although the Proceedings do not show that this harsh rule was ever rescinded, there is no record of its being invoked after this time.

The Industrial School Legislation³

The plans for the first industrial school in Illinois were projected in 1886 when the Illinois Women's Centennial Association "strangely finding themselves in possession of \$500 at the end of their tasks" (in connection with the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of that year) decided that "nothing could be more appropriate than to establish some sort of an institution for our

¹Medical Superintendent of the Infirmary, Report, 1883.

²County Agent, Annual Report, 1880.

³The history of the industrial school legislation and its administration in Cook County is set forth in greater detail in Arlien Johnson, Public Policy and Private Charities (Chicago, 1931), chaps. iv and vi. The writer has drawn freely from this account.

girls."¹ These women were encouraged in their resolution to establish an institution when "Providence threw into [their] possession the Soldiers' Home at Evanston."² Thus accidentally was launched the industrial school movement which was to play such an important part in the development of child care in Illinois and especially in Cook County.

It is likely that the decision to establish an industrial school rather than some other type of institution was due partly to influences from abroad:

Undoubtedly the visit to the United States in 1873 of Miss Mary Carpenter, the English pioneer in the introduction of industrial training for neglected and delinquent children, had stimulated interest in the possibilities of this type of education. Miss Carpenter during her visit had inspected prisons and reformatories, and had spoken in 1874 before the National Prison Congress on "Suggestions on Reformatory Schools and Prison Discipline, Founded on Observations Made during a Visit to the United States." In 1875 a paper prepared by her, entitled "What Should Be Done for the Neglected and Criminal Children of the United States?" was read before the National Conference of Charities and Corrections. Another development which may have influenced the founders of the Illinois Industrial School for Girls was the interest in manual training engendered by the Russian educational exhibit at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.³

The school was incorporated in 1877 and a state-wide association formed to provide financial support. Before the end of the first year there were 41 girls under care, and the board of trustees was faced with the problem of finding other sources of income than the old dollar annual membership fee. Another difficulty which the association had to face was that it had no legal authority to retain girls committed to it. In an effort

¹Mrs. Helen Beveridge, "Debate on the Care of Children" in National Conference of Charities and Corrections, 1881, p. 271.

²Ibid., p. 277.

³Johnson, Public Policy and Private Charities, p. 95. William P. Letchworth of New York read Miss Carpenter's paper at the National Conference and prefaced it by saying that anything she might have to say on the care of neglected children should be of "oracular significance" due to her experience with English methods (Proceedings of the Conference of Charities Held in Connection with the General Meeting of the American Social Science Association, 1875, p. 66).

to find a solution to these pressing problems, a committee consisting of Judge and Mrs. Myra Bradwell and ex-Governor Beveridge was appointed by the board of trustees to consider these matters. The outcome was the drafting of the "Industrial School for Girls Bill," which after some opposition was enacted by the legislature in 1879.¹ The opposition to the bill was directed not against the payment of public funds to a private organization, but rather against permitting the school to retain control of children when their "only misfortune is that they are poor."²

What the act accomplished was to permit any seven or more persons, the majority of whom were women, to establish an industrial school for girls, and accept dependent girls upon commitment from the county court. The definition of a dependent girl included: "Every female infant who begs or receives alms while actually selling or pretending to sell any article in public; or who frequents any street, alley or other place for the purpose of begging or receiving alms; or who, having no permanent place of abode, proper parental care or guardianship, or sufficient means of subsistence, or who for other cause is a wanderer through streets and alleys, and in other public places; or who lives with, or frequents the company of, or consorts with reputed thieves or other vicious persons; or who is found in a house of ill fame or in a poor house."³ The act permitted any responsible resident to petition the county court to inquire into the alleged dependency of such a child and specified that the question of her dependency be determined by a jury of six. If adjudged dependent, the girl was committed to an industrial school until she reached the age of eighteen, and the county was required to pay \$10 per month for her tuition and maintenance.

In 1883, a similar act was passed by the general assembly entitled "An act to provide for and aid training schools for boys."⁴ The principal differences in the two laws were that com-

¹Illinois Laws, 1879, p. 137.

²Johnson, Public Policy and Private Charities, p. 97.

³Illinois Laws, 1879, sec. 3, p. 137.

⁴Ibid., 1883, p. 150.

mitment of boys was until the age of twenty-one, and the charge allowed for maintenance was \$8.00 for those under ten and \$7.00 for those over ten and under fourteen. The act for boys had been passed at the insistence of the Catholic Archbishop of Chicago, Patrick Feehan who had organized that year the St. Mary's Training School for Boys at Des Plaines. As originally drafted this bill, known as the "Feehansville Training School Bill," contained a section providing that the court "in making the order committing a dependent boy to the proposed school, shall have regard to the boy's religion, and whenever practicable assign him to a school, where he will be in charge of persons of the same religious belief as that to which the boy does or should belong. . . ."

It was urged by one member of the legislature that "this rather peculiar provision was calculated to foster sectarian schools, and that the legislature should steer entirely clear of that rock."¹ This provision was omitted in the bill as passed, but the schools which were organized under these acts did develop along sectarian lines.

The Chicago Industrial School for Girls, a Catholic organization which entrusted the care of girls committed to it to the House of the Good Shepherd and the St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum, was organized in 1885; and a Protestant school for boys, the Illinois Industrial Training School for Boys (now the Glenwood Manual Training School) in 1887. These four schools were the only ones organized under the acts prior to 1910. Amendments to the laws in 1911 resulted in a flood of applications for incorporation and in one year eight institutions were added.²

Judicial Interpretation of the Acts

The industrial school acts have been before the Illinois Supreme Court a number of times--most often for an interpretation of Section 3 of Article VIII of the state constitution which prohibits the granting of public money to sectarian institutions by either state or local governments. Here only those cases decided

¹Chicago Tribune, June 4, 1883, cited in Johnson, Public Policy and Private Charities, p. 99.

²Johnson, Public Policy and Private Charities, p. 147.

during the period before 1893 will be noted, although attention should be called to the fact that the court changed its attitude at a later date.¹

In 1882, two cases were brought, in both of which the Illinois Industrial School for Girls was the defendant. In the first of these² the constitutionality of the 1879 act was attacked on the grounds that it was an infringement of the Bill of Rights since it deprived the child of its liberty without due process of law. Mr. Justice Sheldon held that the act was constitutional in that "The power conferred under this act in question upon the county court is but of the same character as the jurisdiction exercised by the court of chancery over the persons and property of infants, having foundation in the prerogative of the Crown, flowing from its general power and duty, as parens patriae, to protect those who have no other protector."

In the second case³ the act was assailed because it permitted the organization of schools for sectarian purposes. In answer to this the court pointed out the first section of the act which expressly forbids the organization of such institutions and added that "If, however, notwithstanding this inhibition, they should be prostituted to such purposes, the law affords ample means for a speedy correction of such an abuse of the act." The question of restraint was also considered again:

We perceive no force in the objection that the act in question is an infringement upon the personal liberty of the citizen, as guaranteed by the constitution. The restraints which the act imposes are only such as are essential to the comfort and well being of the unfortunate class of persons who are brought within its provisions. All governmental and parental care necessarily impose more or less wholesome restraint, and we see nothing in this act which looks beyond this.

In 1887, the county was suffering considerable financial

¹For an account of this interesting litigation see ibid., pp. 106-11. Three of the leading decisions are conveniently found in Grace Abbott, The Child and the State (Chicago, 1938), pp. 11, 85-104.

²Petition of Alexander Ferrier, 103 Illinois 367 (1882).

³County of McLean v. Laura B. Humphreys, 104 Illinois 378 (1882).

embarrassment resulting from the "boodler's" activities, and the bills of all the industrial schools went unsettled for several months. Finally payment of the bill of the Chicago Industrial School for Girls was refused by the board on the grounds that such payment would violate that section of the constitution which declares that "neither the general assembly, nor the county, shall ever pay from any public fund whatever, anything in aid of any church or sectarian purpose, or to help sustain any school controlled by any church or sectarian denomination whatever"; and the school authorities were advised to sue for the collection of their claim.¹ Suit was brought in the circuit court and the case was tried without jury, on an agreed statement of facts. The court rendered a judgment in favor of the school and the county appealed.

Of the relations between the school and the House of the Good Shepherd and St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum, Mr. Justice Magruder, who rendered the decision of the court, said, "The Chicago Industrial School for Girls merely stood for these institutions, and was nothing more than another name for them. Its officers were their officers; its premises were their premises; its training was their training." The court further observed that:

The industrial schools which teach and care for such girls are performing, as substitutes for the state, a duty which the state itself is bound to perform. If they are entitled to be paid out of the public funds, even if they are under the control of sectarian denominations, simply because they relieve the State of a burden which it would otherwise itself be bound to bear, then there is nothing to prevent all public education from becoming subjected by hasty and unwise legislation to sectarian influence.

The argument put forth by the school that the payments made by the county were not aid because they amounted to less than the cost of maintenance was disposed of by the court with the statement that:

It is an untenable position that public funds may be paid out to help support sectarian schools provided only such schools shall render a quid pro quo for the payments made to them. The constitution declares against the use of public funds to aid sectarian schools, independent of the question

¹Proceedings, 1886, p. 242.

whether there is or is not a consideration furnished in return for the funds so used.¹

After this decision by the Supreme Court the secretary of the State Board of Public Charities, Frederick H. Wines, who had warned against the dangers of this legislation, expressed himself as glad that the question had been decided. In speaking of the various proposals that had been made for the care of dependent children in Illinois he summarized some of the important arguments against the subsidy system:

. . . . All of these schemes contemplate the raising of money by taxation, through the intervention of the government, and its disbursement by private persons, whose responsibility to the State for such expenditure will be far more nominal than real. . . . If private persons undertake some form of charitable work, let them find the money to carry it on, without calling on the government for an appropriation. . . . If a private charity can not be sustained without a governmental subsidy, it is usually either because the demand for it does not impress the public, or else because the public has not confidence in its management. Work to which the state grants pecuniary aid should be wholly under the control of the state, and it should be done by officers and employes of the state, in buildings owned by the state.²

Administration of the Law
in Cook County

Despite the decision of 1888, Cook County continued to pay for the care of its dependent children in sectarian institutions. In 1889, the Chicago Industrial School for Girls, apparently in answer to the court's criticism that it was only a paper organization, purchased property and was incorporated as a bona fide industrial school.³

In 1883, when the commissioners began making payments to the St. Mary's Training School, it placed the Committee on Education in charge of the board's relationships with both of the schools which had been organized by that time, and specified that this committee was to inspect the schools and report every three

¹Cook County v. The Chicago Industrial School for Girls, 125 Illinois 540 (1888).

²State Board of Public Charities, Report, 1888, p. 86.

³Ibid., 1892, p. 106.

months;¹ however none of these reports was ever published. Prior to January, 1884, there were no contracts between the schools and the county; however at that time, in an effort to set some limit to the amounts which might be collected, an annual contract was entered into with the St. Mary's Training School which restricted the county's liability to the support of not more than 100 boys.² The contracts with the two boys' schools in 1887 provided that not more than 95 boys should be chargeable to the county at any one time, and that no boy, unless crippled or disabled, should be kept longer than one year after he had reached the age of twelve. Detailed information concerning the number of days attended, the class and general deportment, the trade selected and progress made were required for each boy.³ The contracts with the girls' schools, which were less detailed, set a maximum of 125 girls for which the county would be responsible.⁴ In both instances the county reserved the right to commit more children than the contract called for, but these were to be maintained at the expense of the institutions. Contracts of this sort were renewed annually until 1891 when, instead of specifying a maximum number of children, a maximum amount was written into the contracts.⁵

The estimated number of children sent to the four industrial schools between 1887 and 1893 is shown in Table 18. The amounts paid to these same four schools is shown in Table 19.

Mr. Wines' fears of the effects of the subsidy system were, in later years, shown to be not unfounded. Effective supervision either by the State Board of Public Charities, the committee of the county board or the Juvenile Court has never been possible, with the result that the county's wards have been exposed to every sort of care. In 1906, an investigation of the Illinois Industrial School for Girls revealed that the girls were in a "wretched physical condition," "underfed, overworked" and that the records were in a "complete state of disorder"; some children being entirely lost and others "living in conditions

¹Proceedings, 1882, p. 549.

²Ibid., 1883, p. 92.

³Ibid., 1886, pp. 601-3.

⁴Ibid., 1888, pp. 309-10.

⁵Ibid., 1891, pp. 228-29.

TABLE 18

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF CHILDREN COMMITTED BY COOK COUNTY
COURT TO FOUR INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS, 1887-1893^a

Year	Estimated Number ^b
1887	150
1888	204
1889	295
1890	312
1891	588
1892	762
1893	491

^aIllinois Industrial School for Girls (Park Ridge), Chicago Industrial School for Girls, St. Mary's Training School for Boys, Illinois Industrial Training School for Boys (Glenwood Manual Training School).

^bNumbers estimated from monthly reports of County Agent.

TABLE 19

SUBSIDIES PAID TO FOUR INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS BY COOK COUNTY,
1879-1893^a

Year	Total	Boys' Schools ^b	Girls' Schools ^c
1879-80.....	\$ 1,813.51	\$.....	\$ 1,813.51
1880-81.....	3,317.89	.....	3,317.89
1881-82.....	3,562.99	110.00	3,452.99
1882-83.....	2,774.86	268.96	2,505.90
1883-84.....	5,249.05	1,899.26	3,349.79
1884-85.....	8,297.92	5,265.21	3,032.71
1885-86.....	17,953.65	7,854.01	10,099.64
1886-87.....	13,833.83	6,544.14	7,289.69
1888.....	22,965.74	15,676.05	7,289.69
1889.....	29,467.84	.....	.....
1890.....	35,430.06	.....	.....
1891.....	43,565.03	.....	.....
1892.....	44,999.99	.....	.....
1893.....	44,999.99	.....	.....

^aData taken from Comptroller's Reports.

^bIllinois Industrial Training School for Boys and St. Mary's Training School for Boys.

^cIllinois Industrial School for Girls and Chicago Industrial School for Girls.

which cast shame upon the institution."¹

When the first juvenile court law was passed in 1899, it was provided that nothing in the law should be interpreted as repealing any portion of the industrial and training school acts and that "in all commitments to said institutions, the acts in reference to said institutions may govern the same."² This has been a serious obstacle to the satisfactory development of children's courts since the jurisdiction of the schools in the matter of discharges, is broader than the court's.

The difficulties in developing a comprehensive child welfare program for Cook County under the industrial school legislation with its subsidies are set forth by Dr. Johnson:

Sectarian and nationalistic groups are often more energetic in organizing institutions and agencies for their groups than are non-sectarian associations, thus making a disproportionate provision for certain children and inadequate provision for others. An even more serious disadvantage is the "will to survive" which causes the organizations to take an individualistic view of legislation and administration. Changes are resisted, and it is difficult to modify policies which have once been established.³

¹Illinois Industrial School for Girls, Annual Report, 1906-7, cited by Johnson,

²Laws of Illinois, 1899, sec. 20, p. 137.

³Johnson, Public Policy and Private Charities, p. 178.

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSIONS

In 1833, the Cook County Commissioners spent \$244 for "pauper relief." Sixty years later the public accounts showed that well over a half million dollars was being spent annually for the same purpose; and the little slab-sided almshouse which in the beginning had sheltered not only the destitute, but the sick and insane as well, had been replaced by separate institutions for these groups, each with hundreds of beds and requiring large staffs to operate them. However, despite this enormous increase in the amounts spent and in the numbers cared for, the organization for administration remained practically unchanged. The essential features of this form of governmental organization, administration by committees rather than by responsible executives, and political appointment of personnel, showed themselves to be completely unsatisfactory in the operation of the county institutions for dependent persons.

The destitute citizens of Chicago frequently suffered directly from the operations of ruthless politicians, but their neglect seems to a larger extent to have been due to a failure to understand the causes of destitution. It was fatally easy to regard the inmates of the county institutions and the recipients of the county's "rations" as a sodden mass and to prescribe blanket remedies for them. Although the special needs of the insane were somewhat recognized at an early date, the rest were lumped together as the "paupers" rather than seen as persons who, due to old age, physical handicap, or infancy required special services. Periodic attempts to set this group to work in order that they might earn at least a part of their maintenance always failed, and eventually forced the realization that they were not employable; however each election brought in a new set of officials, unacquainted with the work, who had to learn this fact anew.

This same failure to appreciate the causes of destitution occasionally led to experiments in deterrence as a means of dis-

couraging any but the most desperate needy. Publication of the names of those receiving public assistance and efforts to abolish "outdoor" relief were expedients which entailed needless suffering.

It was only during the last years of the period that there was any sustained interest on the part of organized groups in the community in the administration of the public charities, and it was of this that Julia Lathrop was thinking when she said that:

The public now has and will have exactly such institutions as it demands, managed exactly as its discrimination requires. It is as tiresome as that Carthage must be destroyed, but it is as true, that the charities of Cook County will never properly perform their duties until politics are divorced from them.¹

In the absence of unusual costs or situations demanding grand jury investigation, the operation of the county institutions was left to the commissioners without much public scrutiny. The duties of the State Board of Charities and Corrections to inspect and report were regularly performed with reference to the Cook County institutions; however there was no real authority here to make effective their perennial recommendations for improvement, and the Board was powerless to deal with the problems of political appointment of personnel unless the consequences were so plainly disastrous as to warrant a special investigation such as was made of the Insane Asylum in 1886.

With the exception of a brief period immediately following the great fire in 1871, it was the public rather than the private agencies which through the years bore by far the larger cost of providing for the poor in Chicago. The private societies in the field cannot be criticized for restricting their services to those who promised to benefit most by the funds at their disposal; neither should they be too quickly condemned for sorting the destitute into the "worthy" and the "unworthy," for it is only in recent years that "need" rather than "worthiness" has become the basis for service. What is difficult to understand, however, is their failure to grasp the opportunity which existed to improve the conditions of that much larger group of necessitous

¹Hull House Maps and Papers, p. 161.

persons unreached by their services. If the executives of the private societies who were confident that they understood the proper method of dealing with poverty, had interested themselves and their influential boards in the administration of the public charities instead of ignoring them, progress might not have been so long delayed. It is true that during certain periods in the history of the county board, the interest and co-operation of these voluntary groups would probably have been strenuously resisted; but it is not easy to justify their refusal to extend their help when it was requested, as was true on more than one occasion.

For whatever reason the principle of public responsibility for the care of the poor persisted, and Chicago did not follow in the footsteps of many of the larger Eastern cities who, in despair over the graft and inefficiency of the public officials, turned the task over to the private societies.

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